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REASON

Free Minds and Free Markets™

November 1994

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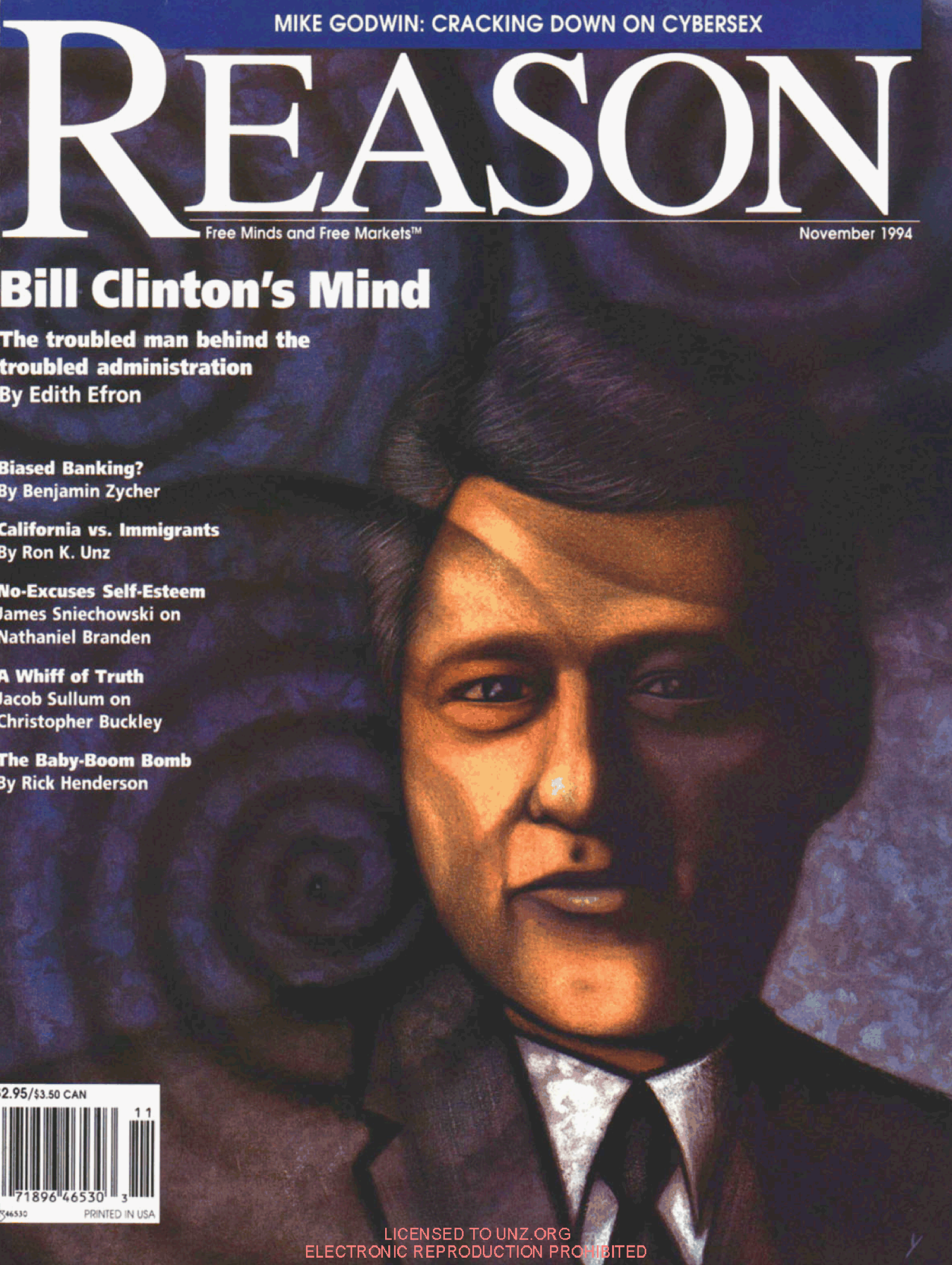

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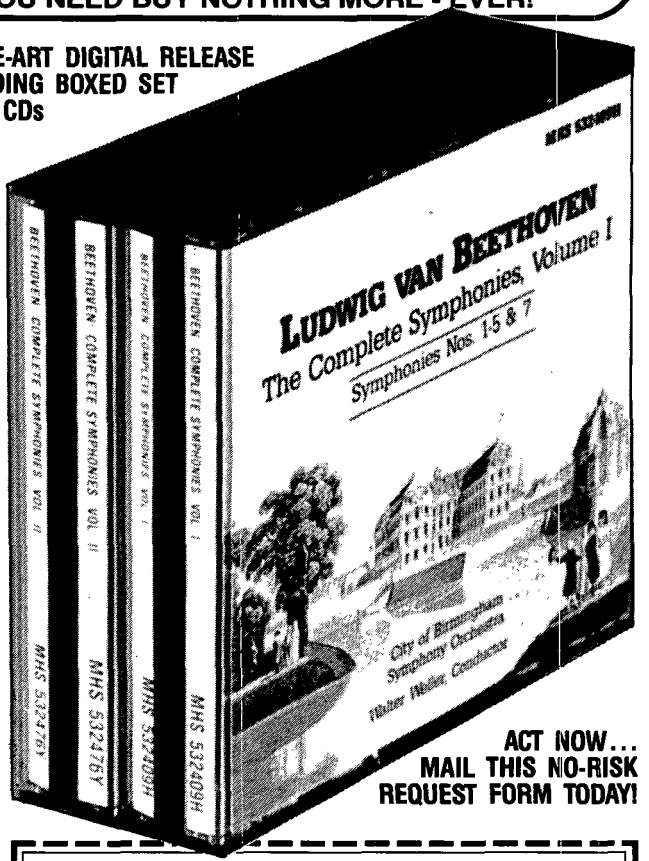

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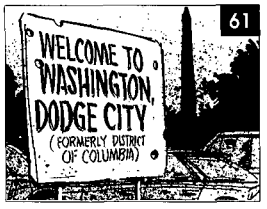

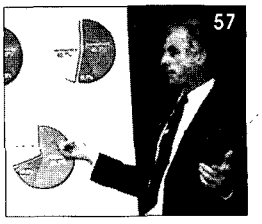

FEATURE

20 ■ Can the President Think?
Edith Efron
The chaos and paralysis of the Clinton presidency reflect Bill Clinton's mind.

EDITORIALS

4 ■ Memory Lapse
Virginia I. Postrel
Clinton's Cuban policy is a victory for welfare statists, nativists—and Castro.

6 ■ Population-Control Explosion
Brian Doherty
The Cairo Population Conference's threat to reproductive freedom.

COLUMNS

46 ■ Immigration: Sinking Our State
Ron K. Unz
California's Proposition 187 is a thinly disguised attack against all immigration.

48 ■ The Law: Virtual Community Standards
Mike Godwin
Putting the cuffs on cyberporn.

51 ■ Health Care: Shots in the Dark
Robert Pollock
Clinton's Vaccine for Children program is already in critical condition.

54 ■ Regulation: Cooked Books
Benjamin Zycher
A government study "proving" discrimination in bank loans doesn't add up.

57 ■ Washington: Retirement Wrangle
Rick Henderson
A bipartisan committee attempts to rope in runaway entitlement spending.

59 ■ Movies: Spectacular Cinema
Charles Oliver
Hong Kong film makers' dedication to excess has been a box-office success.

61 ■ Magazines: Urban Renewal
Martin Morse Wooster
Strategies to save our cities.

74 ■ Selected Skirmishes: Medical Malpractice
Thomas W. Hazlett
ClintonCare's Hypocritical Oath: First, do some harm.

BOOKS

63 ■ Blinded by the Sun
Oren Grad
***Looking at the Sun: The Rise of the New East Asian Economic and Political System**, by James Fallows*

***Japanophobia: The Myth of the Invincible Japanese**, by Bill Emmott*

66 ■ A Call to Consciousness
James Sniechowski
***The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem**, by Nathaniel Branden*

69 ■ Lying for a Living
Jacob Sullum
***Thank You for Smoking**, by Christopher Buckley*

71 ■ Dead Letters
Nick Gillespie
***Recovering American Literature**, by Peter Shaw*

DEPARTMENTS

10 ■ Letters
Male mail, drug rap...

14 ■ Brickbats
GATT spat, Oral Falwell?, when trains and sex collide...

16 ■ Trends
Private vouchers, civil wrongs, jolly green science...

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Memory Lapse

By Virginia I. Postrel

The Clinton administration's refugee policy is a victory for welfare statism—and for Castro.

"You just can't grasp what it's like to live your life with someone telling you where you can or can't go—what it's like not to have the simple freedom to do what you want, when you want, to go wherever you want. I'm 37 years old, and I grew up knowing nothing but East Germany and knowing I would never know anything else of the world. When I stood in front of the Wall that night, I cried like a baby. I couldn't stop.

"My dream, my real fantasy, is to go to America. I want to water ski in Florida."

—"Sigrid," quoted in the Los Angeles Times, *December 17, 1989*

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THE end of history would be so literal? That, five years after the Wall came down, no one would remember how it happened or what it meant? That, five years after the Wall came down, its fall would be as meaningless to the president of the United States as the Monroe Doctrine is to the typical 10th grader?

Five years is not a long time, even in the life of Bill Clinton.

But there are 30,000 Cuban refugees behind barbed wire in the sweltering sun of Guantanamo Bay who can testify that Clinton does not know the meaning of the Berlin Wall. And that he does not know why it fell.

Ever eager to pretend he is John Kennedy, Clinton earlier this year traveled to Berlin and declared, "*Berlin ist frei*" (Berlin is free). "The Berlin Wall is gone," he said. "Now we must decide what we will build in its place." He has decided. Faced with his own Cuban "crisis," he has successfully begged Fidel Castro to build a Wall in the Caribbean.

Bill Clinton is a cowardly man. He is afraid, above all else, of political defeat. Castro has played masterfully to that fear, forcing a change in three decades of U.S. immigration policy and shoring up his government's waning legitimacy in the process. Castro knows that Clinton is terrified of Cuban refugees. They are to Clinton what Willie Horton is to Michael Dukakis—scapegoats for political defeat. Clinton blames violence at an Arkansas refugee camp in part for his traumatic gubernatorial reelection loss. To Clinton, the 1980 Mariel boatlift will always be the Mariel disaster. U.S. immigration policy is driven by fear of "another Mariel."

BUT THE MARIEL DISASTER IS A MYTH. OF the 125,000 Cubans who fled Castro in 1980, maybe as many as 5,000—a mere 4 percent of the total—were prisoners and mental patients Castro wanted to get rid of. Of those, the U.S. government is seeking to repatriate 1,500, slightly more than 1 percent of the total. Yet this tiny fraction is constantly cited as evidence that Mariel was a disaster.

In fact, South Florida absorbed the refugees with some adjustment pains but without long-term trauma. Research by Princeton economist David Card suggests that the influx of Mariel refugees didn't even drive down wages or raise unemployment among existing Miami residents. Instead, the newcomers increased the area's overall wealth. Human beings are valuable, even in crass monetary terms; they produce as well as consume.

The Clinton administration's policy denies that value. And the administration has built at Guantanamo the perfect monument to the linked ideas of welfare statism and anti-immigrant nationalism.

It has seized people with family and ethnic support networks in the United States, with tremendous courage and initiative, and—based on the record of earlier Cuban refugees—with a high likelihood of self-reliance and low chance of welfare dependency. And it has imprisoned them in a mini-welfare state, where their basic physical needs are met but where they are to remain permanently alienated from the Americans who foot the bill.

The cost in lives is obvious, the cost in money rarely reported. One Pentagon estimate pegs the startup expense at $100 million, plus $20 million a month for 45,000 refugees. If Clinton wants to "end welfare as we know it," he could start by releasing these would-be workers into the Miami economy, freeing them to create wealth instead of living off the taxpayers.

As Msgr. Bryan O. Walsh, executive director of Miami's Catholic Community Service and a 35-year veteran of refugee work, told the *Los Angeles Times*: "These are the risk-takers, willing to sacrifice today...to have a better tomorrow. They make the best possible additions to a free enterprise system."

The open society depicted in Walsh's vision of free enterprise is an anathema to welfare statists. And it is equally foreign to the immigration foes who have relentlessly repeated for at least a decade that the free movement of individuals poses a threat to "national sovereignty." Refugees on rafts, they say, constitute an "invasion."

Treating families fleeing tyranny as though they were armies spreading tyranny has perverse consequences. It warps our sense of America—of what a free country represents—and of the crucial difference between individuals and governments. And it warps our foreign policy.

After a decade of repetition, we have begun to take the "invasion" metaphor literally, to reason that when threatened with such "invasion," America must repel the

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invader, by force if necessary. So the administration declares the invasion of Haiti a national imperative, not simply to "restore democracy" but, in the words of U.N. Ambassador Madeline Albright, because of "refugees coming to our shores, which clearly have an impact on the economy of the southern states."

We must launch a military attack on Haiti, reason the Clintonites, to stop immigration. We must halt the "invasion" of refugees in fishing boats.

This is madness. And stupidity. And, most of all, amnesia. The administration and its allies, left and right, believe that the best way to overthrow dictatorships is to bottle up their people and starve them with trade embargoes. If the people suffer enough, it is presumed, they will rebel.

The forgotten history of Sigrid's country suggests otherwise. Embargoes didn't bring down Erich Honecker or the Berlin Wall. Mass migration did.

In the summer of 1989, East Germans began to sneak West, first by the hundreds via Hungary, where they could legally go on vacation, then by the tens of thousands. By August, West German embassies in Budapest, Prague, and East Berlin were packed with refugees. By September, more than 13,000 East Germans were leaving through Hungary; by early October, 17,000 were on "freedom trains" from Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Had Bill Clinton been chancellor of West Germany, he no doubt would have panicked. Fortunately, he was not.

The refugees continued to leave, and they continued to be accepted in the West. By early November, the hemorrhaging was too great. The Wall came down, followed, within a month, by the Communist government itself.

That is how you destroy tyranny. You deprive it of the people on whose labors it feeds—and from whose existence and implied support it derives its legitimacy. You do not allow them to be owned by their rulers, and you do not lock them behind barbed wire.

You let them not only dream of water skiing in Florida. You let them do it. ®

Population-Control Explosion

By Brian Doherty

There are too many people who think there are too many people.

THOUGH IT WAS ADVERTISED AS A FORUM for deliberation, the fix was already in on the United Nations' International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo last month. The international popucrats just wanted to stage a media event to rubberstamp a foregone conclusion to maximal p.r. effect. Sadly, they got away with it.

The headlines on the conference played up the phony conflict over abortion and contraception. By calling the conflict phony, I don't mean to imply that the Vatican and the handful of other countries joining in its disapproval were insincere in their objections to the conference document's stance on abortion and other artificial birth controls.

But their objections *did* play a useful role for their opponents, who had no intention of heeding them. Popucrats and the press were able to portray only superstitious reactionaries straight out of the Middle Ages as fighting the self-evidently humane and necessary goal of tripling world government spending on birth prevention to $17 billion a year. Thus, even the thought that there might be informed secular arguments against centralized population control was shut out of the debate. Cries of "Will no one save me from this meddlesome priest?" echoed through the still Cairo air, but it was howled with a wink. The pope played perfectly his role as Court Reactionary in the judgment hall of world opinion.

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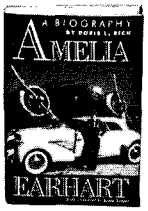

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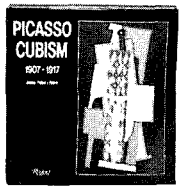

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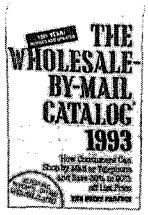

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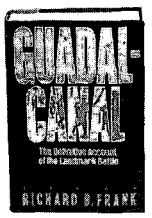

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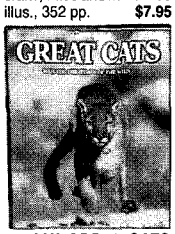

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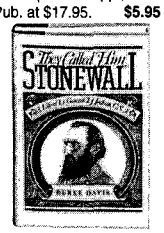

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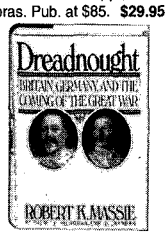

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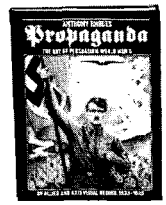

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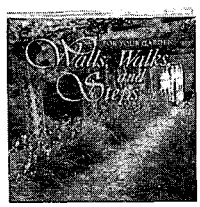

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SINCE THE VATICAN IS AS MUCH AGAINST genuine reproductive freedom as the mainstream popucrats, the real question about overpopulation wasn't asked at Cairo. What are we talking about when we talk about "overpopulation"?

In his statements at the conference, Vice President Al Gore indulged in the usual anti-natalist trick of merely tossing out growing population numbers ominously, as if they were self-evidently frightening. Are they?

The total population density of the Earth right now is around 106 people per square mile (not counting Antarctica)—less than 1/80th the population density of Los Angeles, and less than 1/1,120th that of Dhaka, Bangladesh, a country often used as an example of the ultimate nightmare awaiting all of us through overpopulation. To put it into perspective, if everyone on earth were divided into families of four and given a quarter acre of land to live on (a good-sized suburban plot), they could all fit into one-sixth of the land mass in the United States alone.

Of course, the world's population isn't evenly spread. Most of it, by free choice, is concentrated in urban areas; strangely, people seem willing to pay a premium to live in "overpopulated" conditions. Anyone who travels outside of metropolitan areas or looks out the window of the plane as they fly over the country will see much more unpopulated land than populated. (While looking, thank the densities of population that create the economies of scale that make expensive endeavors like commercial jetliners prevalent.)

This is just anecdotal, though, while the evidence marshalled by population fearmongers consists of cold, hard numbers. Cold, hard, and dumb. Without a conceptual context for understanding how many is too many, the mere tallying of heads tells us nothing.

And by any operative measure of "too many," we are nowhere near "overpopulated." Our natural resources, including food, keep getting cheaper and more abundant. Since 1970, world population has increased around 50 percent. An alarming figure, no? But food prices have fallen 50 percent, despite government policies to drive them up by reducing production. Everything we use to live and thrive takes fewer man-hours to produce, costs less, and is more abundant than 100 years ago, despite the population more than doubling in the same period.

With the proper market institutions and technologies, there is no reason to assume we are 80 stories down in a 100-story plummet, either. While demography and resource economics are both uncertain disciplines, most signs indicate that the only surefire way to stabilize fertility rates is to make people richer. And the way to do that, historical evidence suggests, is more freedom and more economic growth, not central management.

CAIRO'S ANNOUNCED GOAL OF CURBING population at 7.2 billion in 20 years (it is currently 5.6 billion) is couched in rhetoric of female empowerment and "reproductive freedom" through relentless state-sponsored anti-natalist propaganda and birth control technologies spread whether they are wanted or not. China's violently enforced one-child policy might seem a reductio ad absurdum of the Cairo spirit. But the sort of programs popucrats want more of are already in effect in international aid programs, and they are only slightly more attractive than China's.

Such programs include India's policy of bribing women into sterilization through promises of government loans and gifts, and enforcing quotas on civil servants to bring women to sterilization camps for assembly-line procedures taking 45 seconds. (During the sterilization "season," teachers can be hard to find in classrooms since they are out meeting their sterilization quotas, for which they often resort to dragging in post-menopausal women.) In Indonesia and Bangladesh, women are given Norplant by popucrat medical technicians, who then often refuse to remove the implants when the undiscussed side effects are found unpleasant by the "patients." Under such circumstances, the doctor serves the goal of population reduction, not the interests or health of the patient.

Popucrats insist that only ignorance and lack of access to contraceptives make Third World women have as many babies as they do (though even less-developed nations' fertility rates are declining). Yet a recent World Bank–sponsored study found that "actual fertility increases almost one-for-one with desired fertility."

Though the Cairo document talks of reproductive freedom, the popucrats are bedeviled by pesky human desires that don't jibe with what they know is good for us. There is thus a stark contradiction between population goals and reproductive freedom. Popucrats see overpopulation as the cause of almost all the world's poverty, environmental decay, and violence; and the record of government attempts to manage population so far is unsettling. The spirit of Cairo will thus mean less reproductive freedom and more central control to stifle the tried-and-true way more people become boons, not banes: the free play of choices and markets. ®

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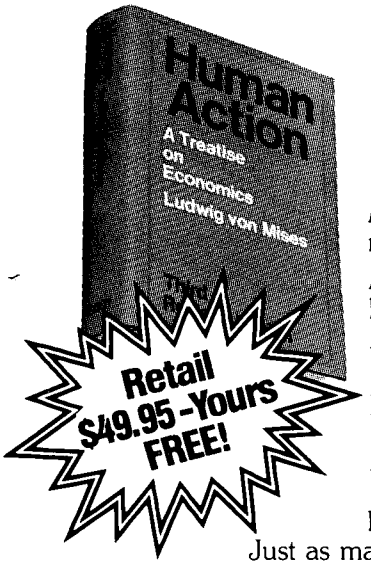

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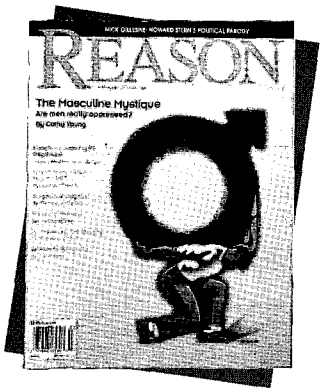

Male Mail

"Ultimately I am in favor of neither a women's movement nor a men's movement but a gender transition movement." Does this quote come from Cathy Young's article? ("Man Troubles," July) Is it part of her criticism of Warren Farrell and the entire masculist movement? No. You might be surprised to find that it comes from Dr. Farrell himself and his book, *The Myth of Male Power.* Young suggests that masculism is merely an attempt to "outshout and out-whine" feminism and that "the ultimate lesson we have still to learn is that most gender issues are women's *and* men's issues" (her emphasis).

What Ms. Young clearly fails to realize is that masculism has learned precisely this lesson and that, in fact, this is the lesson it hopes to teach others. As a masculist, I was heartened by the fact that Ms. Young seemed to get so many of her facts straight, whether she was discussing biases against men in the judicial system or biases against boys in school. But I was deeply saddened by the fact that she doesn't seem to understand the underlying philosophy of masculism at all—a philosophy which, I believe, is wholly consistent with her own.

Jeffrey Seeman
Brookline, MA

Congratulations on having the courage to publish an article on gender issues which doesn't conform to the politically correct misandric genre.

We do wonder, however, why you chose a woman, even one as bright as Ms. Young, to "make sense of the men's movement." She is eminently qualified to make sense of the women's movement, but not necessarily of the men's. We rather prefer to define it ourselves.

Simply put, the legitimate element of the men's movement may be defined as the effort to obtain equal rights and equal dignity for the male gender. Young's article criticizes men for complaining about "victimhood." That's like exhorting a fellow being beat up to quit complaining. She might not be so quick to dismiss men as whiners if her government's standard policy were to evict her at her husband's whim, wrench her children from her, coercively collect alimony support from her, and jail her for refusal to submit.

Not only is such fascism undemocratic, but one might expect the ubiquitous government takeover of the rights and responsibilities of husbands and fathers, as well as massive redistribution of wealth, to be of strong concern to libertarians. Although Warren Farrell is a more legitimate representative of the men's movement than Robert Bly and other mythopoetics, Ms. Young mistakes high-profile writers and liberal organizers for the real theorists of the men's movement. *The Liberator,* a publication of the Men's Defense Association, has been defending the interests of men since 1968. Other, even usually more liberal, men would have been equally qualified to "make sense of the men's movement."

Richard F. Doyle
President
Men's Defense Association
Forest Lake, MN

Ms. Young replies: Mr. Seeman feels that if I could only understand "the underlying philosophy of masculism," I would see that it is "wholly consistent" with mine. If masculism means that both women and men should be free to make life choices based on their individual abilities and preferences rather than gender, that is indeed my philosophy. I also appreciate masculist insights into some gender-specific male disadvantages, at least in our feminist (postfeminist?) age. Yes, men can be subjected to burdensome expectations; but if the philosophy of masculism is that being expected to be strong, logical, active, and independent is just as crippling as being expected to be weak, passive, illogical, and dependent, it is not a philosophy I would embrace.

Warren Farrell may "ultimately" favor a "gender transition" movement, but he also insists that it must be preceded by a men's movement sufficiently strong to balance the women's movement. Discussing whether it would be "fair" to go from feminism to gender transition and skip the masculist stage is an interesting intellectual exercise, but the practical danger is that a political men's movement will try to rival the current women's movement in victim rhetoric, shrillness, and distortions.

For evidence of this, one need only look at Mr. Doyle, whose complaints about my article are a mirror image of classic radical feminist tactics—including his distress that an article about the movement has been assigned to a writer of the wrong sex. Since the September 1994 issue of Mr. Doyle's publication, *The Liberator,* features among its slogans the old German proverb, "Never believe a woman, not even a dead one," I am not surprised by his reaction; I would like only to point out that 1) the article on the men's movement was my idea, and it's not my fault that no male author proposed such an article first and 2) Mr. Doyle's maleness has never precluded him from making pronouncements about feminism. Mr. Doyle also faithfully imitates another standard feminist ploy—that of counter-

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ing charges of whining or a victim mentality by saying, "But we're only calling attention to all the terrible things that happen to us!" Calling attention to real inequities is one thing; calling men an oppressed class and comparing their status, as *The Liberator* does on its front page, to that of slaves in the antebellum South is something else altogether.

Moreover, Mr. Doyle is not entirely forthcoming when he defines his agenda as "equal rights." In *The Liberator*, he repeatedly endorses a very different goal—"the restoration of patriarchy"—tempered with "chivalry," he generously adds. And the current issue features an article whose author candidly states that he would like to see O.J. Simpson "go free, perhaps on a technicality, even if he did the deed," and get custody of his children. Why? Because many feminists supported Jean Harris, who shot her philandering lover, as a victim of "emotional abuse." Could there be a more perfect example of destructive tit-for-tat? The author also expresses his belief that "many men [secretly?] feel the same way." If Mr. Doyle's brand of masculism did not exist, Andrea Dworkin would have had to invent it.

Drug Rap

Ethan Nadelmann ("Mind Alteration," July) neglects an important aspect in legalizing drugs: He works and so would the people who currently commit property crimes to obtain drugs if that were their most viable option. It's been contended that coolies were willing to pull rickshaws for 14 hours a day primarily to afford opium afterwards.

We must emphasize the economic benefits of legalization since it has been demonstrated that libertarian imperatives are irrelevant to the majority of voters. Current data are useful in macroeconomics but aren't meaningful to the average person. If columnists/economists such as Walter Williams and Thomas Sowell put the benefits in terms that people could readily perceive, e.g., net savings in federal, state, and local taxes for a hypothetical owner of a $100,000 home in Broward

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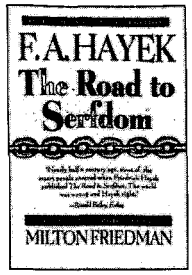

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As this country has all but given up on free markets, it would be up to the government to keep drug costs down to the point where even someone with a 500-pound gorilla on his back could feed it for a reasonable amount, perhaps $10 a day.

Michael Dorion
Deerfield Beach, FL

It is sad that Ethan Nadelmann does not understand the underlying moral reason for drug prohibition to be lifted: A person's body is his or her property, to do with as he or she wishes. As such, the prohibition of certain drugs is itself a violation of personal property rights. When he questions the libertarian's emphasis on property rights he legitimizes the government's drug prohibitions. He also sanctions government restrictions on personal speech and privacy—both of which are simply different forms of property.

The problems caused by prohibition are not simply practical. They are ethical as well. Property rights are the basis for the entire U.S. Constitution. By allowing our government to violate the rights that Americans have in physical property, we have opened the door to violations of personal property rights—and to the crime that such transgressions prompt.

Michael C. Betts
Charlottesville, VA

If the positions and philosophy espoused by Ethan Nadelmann are the "cutting edge" of rational drug policy discussion, we are indeed doomed to long-term carnage in the name of prohibition. For a person supposedly dedicated to individual liberty and common sense, Mr. Nadelmann's philosophy is entirely too inconsistent, filled with the caveats and personal biases that, if implemented, would lead to even more irrational policy.

Even as he advocates fundamental freedom to make personal choices, he claims that a free market (even in cigarettes!) without the government playing an inhibitory role is "not a desirable thing." Like a true statist, he endorses the idea of government "encouraging people to act in their own interests"—which, of course, can be defined not by each individual, but by Ethan Nadelmann and Big Brother. In other words, while I have a perfect (or at least recognizable) right to smoke, it is perfectly legitimate for the government to use my money to try to discourage me from doing so!

Even more nonsensical is the idea that drugs should be sold by mail but not on the open market. The basic fact that Mr. Nadelmann evades is that government has no legitimate business in the drugs arena. He seems to be trying to inch along the path of regulation, with bureaucrats deciding what drugs people can possess and use, in what quantity, and in what places. This policy is the same as prohibition, except that the individual decisions made by the bureaucrats might be less extreme than the decisions that are currently in force.

Saying that people have a right as long as it is exercised in an acceptable way is to say that they don't have that right at all. The whole point of a right is that it cannot be revoked or infringed on by the state. If it can be, it is not a right, but a privilege or a whim. This is not to say that government does not have a legitimate role in responding to actions done under the influence—because at that point, the rights of others

Coming Next Month

The AIDS debate continues, with a special section featuring letters, pro and con, on whether HIV causes AIDS, and replies from Charles Thomas, Kary Mullis, and Phillip Johnson, authors of our June cover story, "What Causes AIDS?"

may be implicated. However, until that point, no amount of academic jargon can finesse the issue. As Ayn Rand wrote, "The fundamental question is, 'Is man free?' All the rest is practical application."

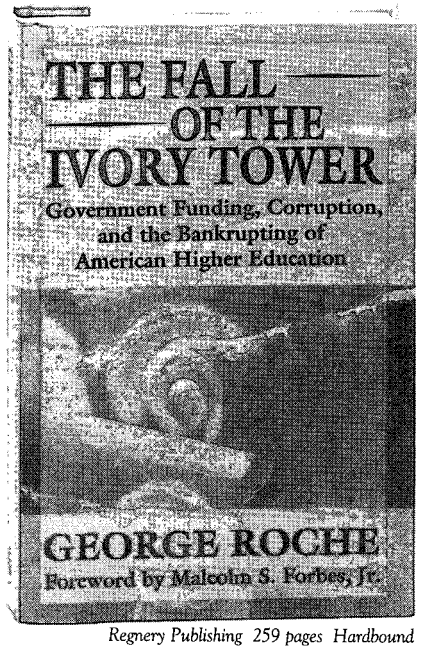
I greatly respect Mr. Nadelmann's candor and admire his willingness to admit that he has not considered every nuance of the issue. However, unless and until he begins to build upon a more solid philosophical foundation, his argument will continue to dissolve into confusion, uncertainty, and inconsistency. Because he is in a position to be heard, I hope that his message will develop into a consistent, rational call for an absolute end to prohibition, and an unqualified endorsement of individual rights and liberties.

T. Anthony Rowls
Cincinnati, OH

Mr. Nadelmann replies: Debates with libertarians are always fun and interesting. Since I spend much of my time debating and addressing the 98 percent of Americans who prefer more punitive and prohibitionist policies than I do, it is refreshing to think about the issues raised by those who want less restrictive policies.

I am familiar with, and even sympathetic to, the criticisms raised in the letters, including both those that view any government restriction on property or self-regarding behavior as unethical and those that view the regulations I favor as a slippery slope toward Big Brother. I do believe that individual freedom needs to be accorded far greater due in our laws than is currently the case—but I also believe that democratically elected governments can and should play modest roles in advancing public health. Politically, we have little choice but to work with reform-minded prohibitionists in advocating and designing compromise policies that remove the worst aspects of drug prohibition. And intellectually, I find it difficult to imagine a libertarian approach to drug control surviving the inevitable pressures to protect children and mentally disabled adults from unrestricted drug availability.

Let me take this opportunity to point out one other area of dispute between libertarians and those, such as myself, who are more civil libertarian in our preferences. I believe strongly in a right of privacy and bodily integrity and favor laws that would severely restrict the power of employers, both private and government, to test their employees' urine, blood, hair, and skin for the presence of drugs. Many libertarians, by contrast, believe that freedom of contract is the more important right—one that includes the right of powerful government and corporate employers to subject citizens to virtually any conditions, including invasive testing of bodily fluids. There is, I believe, no way of finessing this conflict of fundamental rights. Libertarians have no choice but to choose which rights they want government to elevate over others.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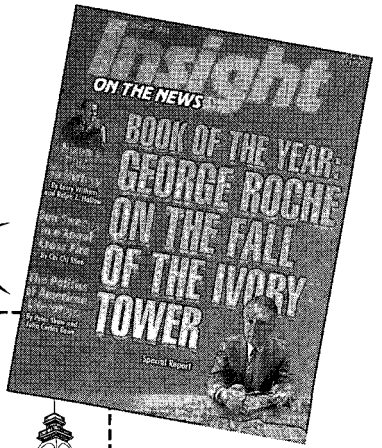

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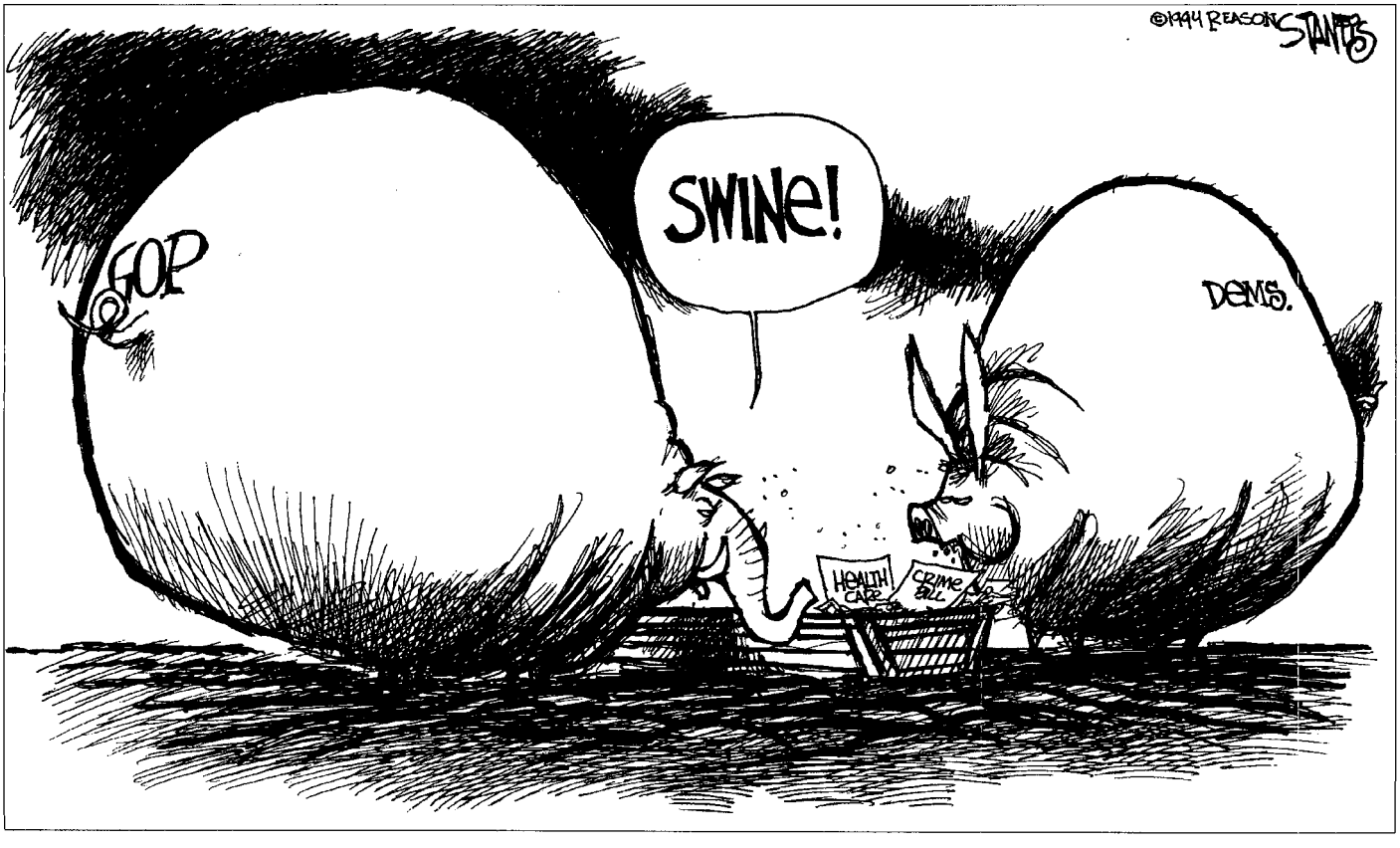
"NOW WHERE IS THAT STUFF... VLADY, YOU DIDN'T LEND ANYONE THE PLUTONIUM, DID YOU?"

HENRY PAYNE



SCOTT STANTIS

CHIP BOK

■ **Cuba's collapsed economy is a** source of great discomfort to that country's government. So what measures is it taking to deal with it? Well, it recently began a crackdown on those it believes have earned too much money in the small private sector. So far, more than 370 people have been charged with "illegal enrichment."

■ **A Chicago man thought that he would** do his part to help clean up the air by purchasing an electric car. But state motor vehicle officials refused to grant the car a license. Why? State law demands that all cars pass an emissions test. Since the car has no emissions there is no way to test it. Therefore, the state of Illinois wouldn't license it. Something tells me that people at the vehicle inspections department have spent just a little too much time sniffing at exhaust pipes.

■ **A television station in Jacksonville,** Florida, has canceled Jerry Falwell's show following viewer complaints. Were viewers tired of looking at his helmet of hair? Did they object to his appeals for money? Nope, they thought his show was too sexually explicit. In recent months, the Rev. Falwell has been obsessed with Bill Clinton's sexual improprieties, discussing them in some detail on his show. One woman said that she complained after her 9-year-old son asked what oral sex was after hearing Falwell discuss it.

■ **In Colorado, Aspen City Councilman** Terry Paulson stunned attendees at a council meeting when he admitted that he planted a fake Indian medicine wheel on Burrit Mountain in hopes that the "archaeological find" would block expansion of the Snowmass ski resort. Now, Ute tribal officials have denounced Paulson for "mocking Indian religion." Even worse, they say his activities may have destroyed a real native site there.

■ **It was Dennis Wadsworth's first day on** the job, and he probably wanted to make a good impression. He certainly made a big one. The truck driver ran out of gas during his first trip to London. He parked his rig near Downing Street and went for fuel. He came back to find that bomb-disposal experts had blown up his truck.

■ **Marcia Ramos and Darryl Johnson ap-** parently love each other very much, so much so that they couldn't wait to get home and make love. They tried to consummate their passion on a New York City subway track. Unfortunately, they didn't count on the obvious. A train hit them, dislocating Johnson's pelvis, injuring his neck, and severing half of one foot. Ramos was unhurt. Now, the two are suing the transit system for $10 million, accusing it of "carelessness, recklessness, and negligence" for daring to send a train down a rarely used track without alerting them.

■ **For eight years, Dick E. Mallory of** Acme, Michigan, has published at his own expense the *Dick E. Bird News*, a paper he says is full of the "best darned bird stories ever told." Mallory distributed the paper free at Michigan travel centers. But the state Department of Transportation has put a stop to that practice. A department worker complained that the name of the paper is a little too reminiscent of a certain slang term. Let no one say that the transportation department is full of bird brains.

■ **Nude dancers in Philadelphia have** started getting used to the idea that they have to have a city license to practice their art. But it's going to take some time to get accustomed to city officials measuring their breasts. When feature dancer Crystal Storm, who bills herself as 121XXX-24-36, came to town, Department of Licenses and Inspection officials came calling to make sure she had the requisite license. They had that authority; it's the law. But it seems they may not have had legal authority to do what they did next. They measured Ms. Storm to see if her claims were true. They weren't: Her bust measured a mere 50 inches.

■ **When Al Gore battles Ralph Nader, who** do you root for? Who cares? On a radio broadcast talking about the new GATT treaty which he opposes, Nader gave out the telephone number of Gore's legislative liaison office. Soon calls were coming in so fast that Gore's staffers could do no other work. Then someone hit on a plan. Using call forwarding, they rerouted the calls to Nader's office.

—Charles Oliver

Going Private

School voucher programs that don't rely on government funds

By Ed Carson

MARIA GONZALEZ IS NOT A FAN OF San Antonio public schools. At the beginning of the 1992–93 school year, she had four children in public schools, two in elementary school, two in middle school. But her youngest daughter was constantly crying in class, her oldest son was being roughed up, and her eighth-grade daughter was being pressured to join gangs.

Concerned with their academic, emotional, and physical well-being, Gonzalez wanted to get her children out, but she couldn't afford private school tuition. Fortunately, she could turn to the San Antonio Children's Educational Opportunity Foundation, a privately funded program that provides low-income children with vouchers to cover up to half of private school tuition.

Gonzalez applied for private school vouchers for her two youngest children in August 1993 and for her older kids in December. The CEO Foundation awards vouchers that pay up to one-half of tuition, with a cap of $75 per child per month. After CEO confirmed that the Gonzalez children meet the program's two basic requirements—that they qualify for the free or reduced-price federal school lunch program and live and attend school within the county—they were put on the waiting list.

Because the program gives priority to applicants currently in public school, they went to the top of the list. The younger children received vouchers within a month, the older children almost immediately. Gonzalez could then enroll her children in any area private schools that agreed to accept the vouchers. (CEO sends its contribution directly to the school.) This year, all four children are attending the non-denominational Sunnybrook Christian Academy.

The San Antonio CEO Foundation is not unique; similar programs operate in 14 other cities nationwide serving an estimated 7,000–8,000 children. Private vouchers are the brainchild of Pat Rooney, CEO of the Golden Rule Insurance Company, who organized the Educational CHOICE Charitable Trust program in 1991 to provide school choice to low-income children in the Indianapolis Public Schools district. Rooney hoped that when politicians and the public saw a voucher system working, they'd be more willing to support government-funded vouchers.

Penalizing Youth

Community rating is another generational rip-off.

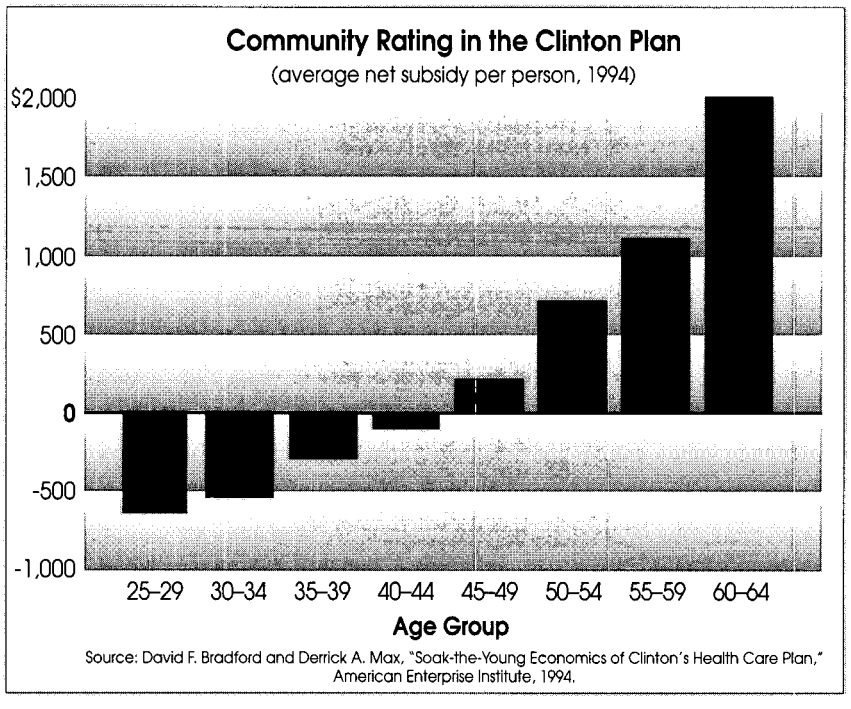
By Ed Carson

After nearly two years of heated debate over health care, one major possible change is still almost universally praised: community rating. Under community rating, everyone in a defined community must be offered health insurance at the same premium.

This would trigger a massive transfer of wealth from the young to the old. Younger and healthier people who buy health insurance would be forced to pay artificially high rates to subsidize the health care of older and sicker people.

David Bradford and Derrick Max of the American Enterprise Institute estimate that people between the ages of 25 to 29 would see their premiums go up by an average of $651 a year, while people aged 60 to 64 would be subsidized $2,000 a year under the Clinton plan. (Medicare would continue to cover Americans 65 and over.) The same pattern holds true under other variations of health-care reform.

Because young Americans make less and own fewer assets than older Americans, community rating would perversely redistribute wealth from the have-nots to the haves.



Source: David F. Bradford and Derrick A. Max, "Soak-the-Young Economics of Clinton's Health Care Plan," American Enterprise Institute, 1994.

One of the curious aspects of the private voucher movement is that many programs are in business to go out of business. Several program directors would like government voucher programs to eliminate the need for private vouchers. But others are concerned about the possible restrictions imposed on government vouchers, and some even suggest that private vouchers could eliminate the need for government funding of education entirely.

Regardless of funders' motives, complete freedom of school choice is a major factor for the popularity of the CEO program and other private voucher programs among parents. Milwaukee's private voucher program, Parents Advancing Values in Education, is in direct competition with a government-funded voucher program. PAVE received four times the number of applications as the government program and provided more than three times the number of scholarships for the 1993–94 school year—even though PAVE covers only half of the private school's tuition and the government program pays full tuition and transportation costs.

Gonzalez says that the impact on her children has been dramatic and immediate, especially with Rebecca, her youngest child. Rebecca is now an honors student, and is eager to go to school. And Gonzalez is eager to send her there. "It gives me real peace of mind to know that my children are in a good environment with people who care," she says.

Privately funded voucher programs give 7,000–8,000 low-income students in 15 cities an alternative to public schools.

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Balance Sheet

By Rick Henderson

Assets

Neighborhood Watch. Demographers debunk the myth of a "balkanized" America. Housing integration surges, especially in fast-growing, formerly segregated cities in the South and the West. In *American Demographics*, the University of Michigan's Reynolds Farley reports that eight of the nation's 10 most-integrated metropolitan areas are in the Sunbelt; the other two are Anchorage and Honolulu.

Taking Flight. Congress passes a bill prohibiting lawsuits against aircraft manufacturers for accidents involving planes more than 18 years old. (Over the past two decades, liability lawsuits have halted the domestic manufacture of inexpensive piston-engine airplanes and axed 100,000 jobs in general aviation.) Thanks to this minor tort reform, says *Forbes*, by 1996 Cessna may sell 2,000 new planes a year, some costing as little as $100,000.

Info-boon? Congress may adjourn before the Democrats further regulate telecommunications. And next year, Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) will propose a bill that would repeal the 1992 cable act, let the Baby Bells offer long-distance service and manufacture equipment, and allow electric companies and other utilities to offer cable and phone service.

Cops Cuffed. The California legislature unanimously reforms asset forfeiture. (See "Ill-Gotten Gains," Aug./Sept. 1993.) Prosecutors must first get a criminal conviction before seizing property. They also must prove that the impounded property was used in a drug crime. And cops can't use the cars, boats, stereos, and other items they confiscate.

Liabilities

Pediatric Pander. Statists acknowledge they can't overtly socialize American medicine. Instead, they hope to take over health care by stealth. *Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne Jr. suggests guaranteeing health insurance for every American younger than 18, then extending coverage to pregnant women (as the Mitchell and Chafee bills propose) and eventually everyone. KidCare might also buy off pro-family conservatives. Will family-leave co-sponsor Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) back this, too?

Brokaw the Barbarian. Congressional censors may lower the boom on television violence this year. Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.) would spend $6 million to fund surveys of TV violence and issue quarterly "report cards." And Sen. Fritz Hollings (D-S.C.) wants to ban broadcasters from airing violent programs when children watch. One problem: A Center for Media and Public Affairs survey reports that violence depicted on news programs is rising faster than that shown on cartoons, movies, or dramas.

Hamburglars. Greens sock fast-food lovers in Germany. The city of Kassel taxes restaurants 30 cents for each paper plate, 25 cents for each can or nonreturnable bottle, and 6 cents for each disposable utensil thrown away. The Bonn government may implement this so-called garbage-reducing tax nationwide. McDonald's says the extra costs may force the chain to close some German restaurants. A test run for enviro initiatives here?

MADDening. Prohibitionists rival the AARP in lobbying firepower. Eleven states cut the permissible blood-alcohol content for drivers from 0.1 to .08; 23 other states have similar bills pending. Seven states have passed .00 (zero-tolerance) laws against drivers younger than 21; two states have a .01 limit, and eight states a .02 limit. The U.S. Senate passes a bill applying the .02 limit to teenagers nationwide.

Civil Wrongs

Righting affirmative action mistakes

By Robert Pollock

"DISCRIMINATION ISN'T WRONG because certain people suffer, it's wrong because anybody suffers," says California State Assemblyman Bernie Richter (R-Chico). Last summer he proposed a constitutional amendment that would end racial preferences and discrimination by the state of California and its agents, including the enormous state university system. Opponents of affirmative action have never before mounted such a serious political challenge to the practice.

The amendment had 43 co-sponsors in the state legislature, but as expected, it failed to make it out of committee in August. Advocates of the California Civil Rights Initiative now plan to propose the amendment as a statewide ballot initiative in March 1996.

They'll need 615,000 signatures. But every reliable poll taken for the last 20 years shows that about 70 percent of Americans oppose preferential treatment for women and underrepresented minorities. Even a majority of African Americans—often the intended beneficiaries of such programs—oppose affirmative action, and there is no significant gender gap in support.

The operative provision of the CCRI reads: "Neither the State of California nor any of its political subdivisions or agents shall use race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin as a criterion for either discriminating against or giving preferential treatment to any individual or group in the operation of the state's system of public employment, public education or public contracting."

The CCRI would do more than just promote a color-blind society. It could also save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars annually, especially in the universities and state contracting, says the state's attorney general. Supporters of the measure hope the idea will spread to the 22 other states that allow ballot initiatives.

Sound Science?

The National Institute for the Environment's alarmist agenda

By Lisa Snell

"SUCH PHENOMENA AS GLOBAL climate change, depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer, mass extinction of plant and animal species, pollution of oceans and freshwater, proliferation of toxic substances, and unprecedented growth of population, present new and critical challenges to policy makers," testified Richard Benedick, chief U.S. negotiator for the Montreal Protocol on ozone depletion, before a House committee in May. He was speaking in favor of establishing a National Institute for the Environment.

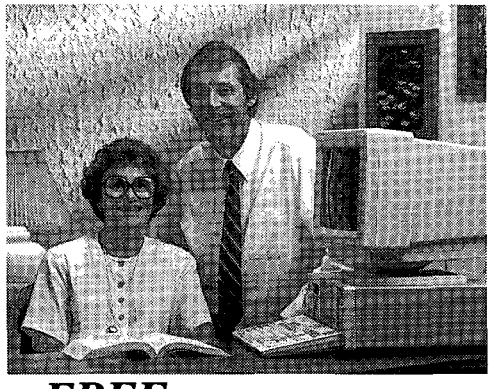
Over the past couple of decades environmental activists have used findings from supposedly neutral government agencies to impose draconian regulations in response to those alleged crises. Now supporters of a new "independent" government agency are dragging up the same old bogeymen to justify the NIE, which will supposedly fund sound peer-reviewed environmental research.

The campaign to establish the NIE got a boost in June, when the U.S. Conference of Mayors endorsed the idea. The mayors believe that the new organization would allow local governments to have more influence over environmental policies.

But the mayors' group may be trading short-term political influence for more long-term regulation. Environmental groups supporting the NIE are largely responsible for promoting the regulations that soak local taxpayers. A Price-Waterhouse study commissioned by the conference estimates that environmental mandates will cost local governments $51 billion over the next five years.

During the May congressional hearing, supporters of the NIE made it clear that "environmental justice"—the contention that toxic waste facilities are disproportionately located in minority neighborhoods—would be high on the institute's agenda. Advocates of environmental justice would, for instance, take the siting of waste facilities away from local government and let federal agencies decide where a waste facility could be located.

Benedick's apocalyptic testimony suggests an alarmist agenda for the NIE. As Garrey Carruthers, former governor of New Mexico and chairman of The Advancement of Sound Science Coalition, cautions, when you begin with assumptions about which environmental catastrophes need to be addressed, "then you have already gone beyond sound science and you are trying to justify your existence." ®



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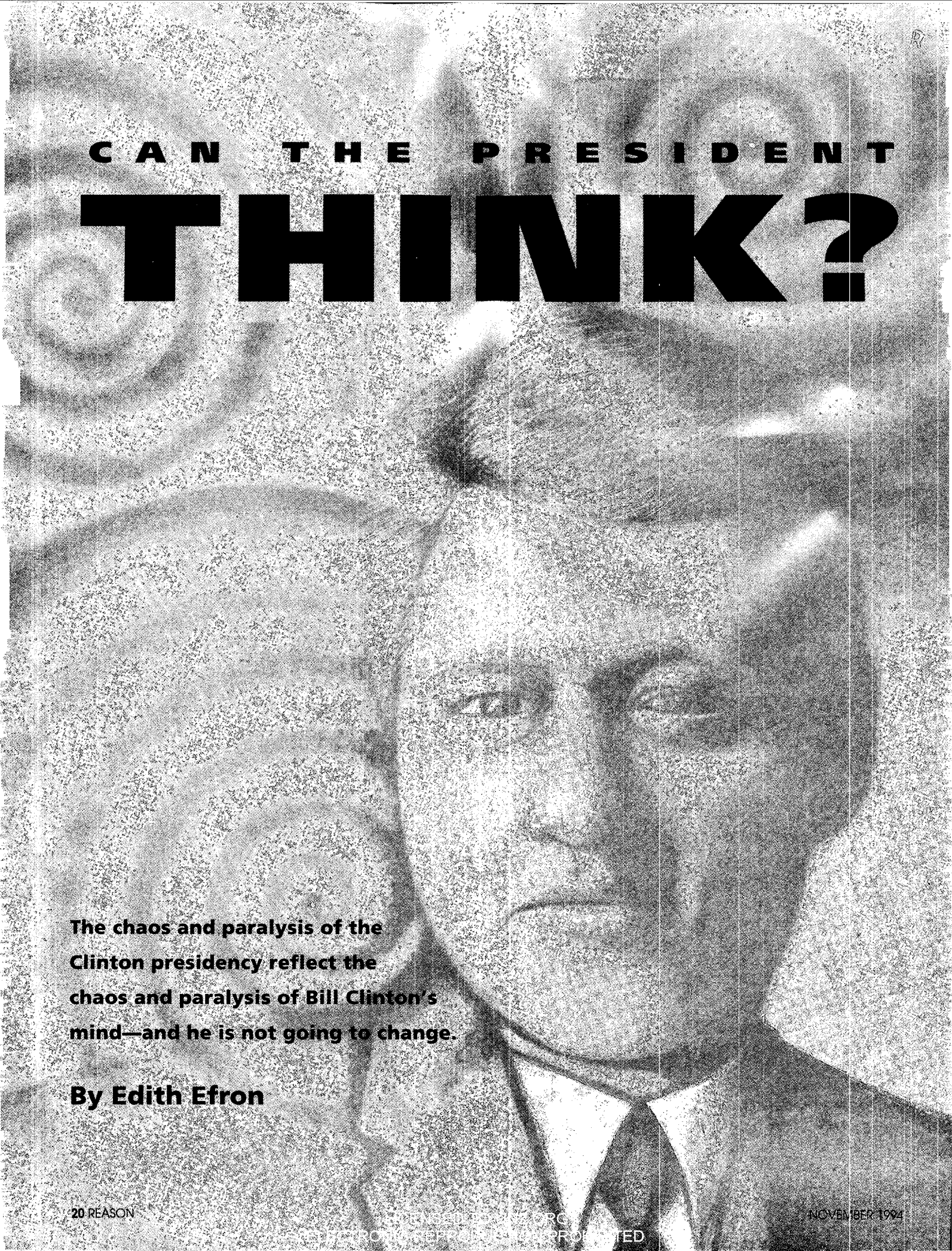


CAN THE PRESIDENT THINK?

The chaos and paralysis of the Clinton presidency reflect the chaos and paralysis of Bill Clinton's mind—and he is not going to change.

By Edith Efron

On June 7, 1993, after Bill Clinton had been in office five months, a very peculiar "media conference" was held at George Washington University and filmed for C-SPAN viewers. It was peculiar because of its theme and because it was thoroughly exasperating.

The theme was "The Politics of Illness in High Office." Among its participants were such journalistic eminences as Richard Harwood of *The Washington Post*, Marianne Means of King Features Syndicate, and Charles Bierbauer of CNN. These are smart and experienced people who under ordinary circumstances would not be dull either singly or collectively. But on this occasion, they all seemed to be wearing baskets on their heads.

Here's roughly how it went:

Q: Does the public have a right to know whether a president has physical illnesses, such as medical emergencies or chronic degenerative diseases?

A: Sure. The public does. The days of covering up the diseases of presidents such as FDR and JFK are over.

Q: How about mental illness, psychological or emotional disorders?

A: Well, that is a problem. The prospect of an "emotionally unstable leader" with his finger on the button scares people. Even consulting a psychotherapist has a stigma. It causes inhibition in consulting a doctor when one should. Nervous joke: You have to be crazy to run for president anyway. Ha, ha, ha.

Q: Does the public have a right to know if a president suffers from a mental disorder?

A: Yes, but only if it affects his work as president.

Q: Will future presidential candidates and presidents be required to reveal their medical and psychiatric records if any?

A: Probably, possibly, yes, no, mumble.

And? And nothing. Just that, exasperating. A brand new president was staggering around in Washington, falling repeatedly on his face. Nobody but that staggering, lurching president was on everybody's mind. And it was that president whose medical records were sealed. Did the panelists want to know what was in them? They didn't say. Were they thinking, perhaps, that Clinton might be suffering from a psychological or emotional disorder? They didn't say. Was it possible that psychological difficulties might be related to his political difficulties? They didn't say.

To stress what was not discussed at this conference in early June 1993 implies that there was information about the psychology of the new president that should have been or could have been discussed. Was there?

Of course there was. Since the primaries, the press coverage of Clinton had been bristling with reports on his psychological attributes, although the word *psychology* was never used. For more than a year, reporters had been in a competition to discover interesting details about Clinton's mental processes and his emotional and behavioral patterns—which is to say, about his psychology.

By the time Clinton had been in office for five months—when the conference was held—the psychological details gathered by journalists had already coagulated into little clusters, or patterns, which demanded explanation. By the time Clinton had been in office for a year, when the conference was already a faded memory, he had been besieged by so many political and personal problems—some contemporary, some relevant to his past—that his psychology was a staple of conversation in the political and media worlds. And by the time Clinton had been in office for two years, he had become a human puzzle that journalists and academic students of the presidency were trying to solve.

Today, psychiatric terms, diagnostic categories, are sprinkled about like salt and pepper, seasoning the political prose written about Clinton. Headlines have appeared containing psychiatric jokes and puns. At least two psychiatrists and a clinical psychologist have expressed their opinions about Clinton in *The Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times*. Yet other psychiatrists have opined about Clinton in the pages of *Time*. Clinton's psychology is discussed in political science journals devoted to studies of the presidency. And in the first crop of commercial books about the Clintons one finds the same phenomenon: Save for Clinton's mother, in her autobiography *Leading with My Heart*, all the authors are concerned with Clinton's psychology.

It is an odd fact that this epidemic of long-distance "psychoanalyzing"—not seen in this country since the '60s and '70s—has been going on even as various journalists and social scientists have been trying to declare the issue of Clinton's "character" outside the boundaries of respectable journalism. It is, of course, Clinton's character which has caused the wave of psychological thinking.

There is precedent for such attention: As political scientist Michael Beschloss has observed in *The New Yorker*, it was the characters of John F. Kennedy, Edward Kennedy, and Richard Nixon which led to the long-distance analysis of presidents and presidential candidates by psychiatrists, the explosion of political psycho-biography in the 1970s, and the now-standard inquiries into presidents' psychologies by students of the presidency.

Clinton is the first president since that stormy period to display character flaws and neurotic qualities so significant that the impulse to conduct psychological excavations has arisen anew. And this time, journalists are not waiting for the historians. There is no reason why they should, since historians get much of their information from the press. The academic monopoly on telling us what is wrong with our presidents after they are all dead and we can do nothing about it is broken.

Freed from that academic monopoly, journalists are floundering around trying to test the limits of their freedom, and the task is particularly difficult, given the nature of our current president.

Some journalists realize they are lacking an analytical tool when they write about Clinton; they just don't quite know what it is. For an article about press coverage of Clinton's "decision-making style," David Shaw of the *Los Angeles Times* interviewed Jeffrey H. Birnbaum of *The Wall Street Journal*, who has covered both the Clinton campaign and the White House. Birnbaum had this to say about Clinton: "You almost have to come up with a new language to describe how he operates."

Psychology provides such language, above all when it is psychological language Clinton has used about himself. Using it can help journalists and citizens who have been struggling to integrate the information they already have about a seemingly

TROY THOMAS

unintegrated man. In this article, relying only on published or televised information, I have attempted such an integration. The result is a psychological profile of Bill Clinton.

I should say a word about the propriety of this enterprise. If Clinton's psychological problems were of an entirely private nature and had no influence or impact whatsoever on his work as president, discussing them would be a manifestation of what Sidney Blumenthal has criticized as "psychological reductionism." This, says Blumenthal in *The New Yorker* (June 20, 1994), is the assumption that "the true self is a hidden self—that the public self is merely a deceptive mask."

By "psychological reductionism," Blumenthal really means *sexual* reductionism. His article, "The Friends of Paula Jones," deals solely with the exploitation by individuals and groups in the religious right of Clinton's real or alleged sexual behavior.

Blumenthal's point, however, remains valid. The "true self" cannot be reduced to a "hidden self," and the "public self" of a political figure, above all of a president, is immensely significant. Clinton's psychological problems are important precisely because of their impact on Bill Clinton's "public self." They could scarcely be *more* public.

Clinton has true charisma, a sudden blazing internal radiance which the possessor learns to produce volitionally and in full, conscious awareness of its seductive effect. Clinton has the power to seduce others, to get them to submit to his will. And when they do, they give him in turn the vision he seeks. What Clinton sees in the faces of the adoring crowds is the reflected face of the Sun King. Only those adoring crowds can give this Narcissus the ineffable joy of adoring himself.

In this article, the subject is not Clinton's sex life but his *mind*—as it has been reported on by journalists and authors of books. And what one discovers from their reports on Clinton's mind is of overwhelmingly greater public significance than any details about his sex life.

To follow Bill Clinton's lead and explore the psychological issues he himself has talked about, and to see how the press has been incessantly preoccupied by his psychology, is to acquire great insight into Bill Clinton, his presidency, his conflicts with the press, and the political events of the past two years.

It is also to understand, however, that psychological problems must be analyzed in psychological terms and that *political* reductionism is also an error. Psychological problems cannot be explained in political terms. I refer to specific political events occasionally in this article but only to provide a temporal framework for the analysis. The purpose of this article is to present a close-up view of Clinton's mind, not of his policies.

The Questions

Throughout most of Clinton's term in office, there has scarcely been a political development that has not generated questions about his psychology. Many have pertained to trivial matters. Many have been expressions of heightened conservative hostility to Clinton. But a surprising number of other questions have addressed psychological fundamentals and revealed that many serious liberals no longer feel they understand the man for whom they voted. Who *is* Clinton really? Does he have a "self"? What kind of a politician is he—why does he pursue power? What is the nature of the strong response to him? Is he a sincere advocate of social justice? What kind of mind, what kind of an intellect, does he have?

Those who ask the question, Who is Clinton *really*?, are usually journalists preoccupied by Clinton's self-contradictory nature. They tend to explore it with a similar technique. The writers offer little bursts of contradictory phrases, little vignettes of contradictory actions, little insights into contradictory emotions, and arrange them deftly to form an unintelligible mosaic called "Clinton."

Tom Rosenstiel of the *Los Angeles Times*, Chris Bury of ABC, Maureen Dowd of *The New York Times*, Richard Cohen of *The Washington Post*, and Joe Klein of *Newsweek* have all used this mosaic technique. And all have reached a similar conclusion—that Clinton is "in hiding" (Cohen); that Clinton is a multifaceted being without a unifying self (Klein); that he is whatever you happen to be looking at or, as Bury resignedly put it, "what you see is what you get." Dowd, the most literary, climaxed a fusillade of contradictions by saying, "In the end, the focus is the unfocusability." And Rosenstiel will be quoted below.

Not until Bob Woodward's *The Agenda* could one be certain of the original template for the mosaic technique. One finds it in the partly quoted, partly paraphrased views of George Stephanopoulos: "'You've got to always keep in mind,' Stephanopoulos said to one of his closest associates, that watching Clinton 'is like a kaleidoscope. What you see is where you stand and where you're looking at him. He will put one facet toward you, but that is only one facet.' Every time, the kaleidoscope would reflect the fragment of stone at the bottom in a unique way, showing a different facet; every person would see a different pattern. It was real, but it could change in an instant, as soon as Clinton turned."

Such descriptions are fascinating to read, but they leave one as baffled about Clinton after reading them as before. Other journalists have taken the next disturbing step: They've looked behind the self-contradictory mosaic and reached the grim conclu-

sion that Clinton has no "self." In his book, *Strange Bedfellows*, which describes the coverage of the presidential campaign of 1992, Rosenstiel writes: "Like many politicians Bill Clinton is a man of unfinished and contradictory character—scholarly and shallow, outgoing and shy, principled and craven, the mood depending on the motive. He possesses extraordinary talent and a fierce thirst for knowledge and insight, but above all approval. *One reporter who spent time with him...in New Hampshire found him one of the most outwardly directed people she had ever met—as if he had little inner sense of self at all.*" (Emphasis added.)

When Rosenstiel speaks for himself he creates a mosaic, but when he quotes the reporter who dived beneath the mosaic he gives no name. If he did, Anonymous would never get into the White House again.

Journalists with names also have identified this absence of self in Clinton, but they are not dependent on the Washington media-political establishment. One is Lewis Lapham, editor of *Harper's*. In the April 1993 issue Lapham described Clinton's response to a group of people: "[He] roamed across the sound stage like a starved animal, feeding on the questions from the audience as if they were the stuff of life and breath." And: "He defines himself as a man desperately eager to please, and the voraciousness of his appetite—for more friends, more speeches, more food and drink, more time on stage, more hands to shake, more hugs—*suggests the emptiness of a soul that knows itself only by the names of what it seizes or consumes.*" (Emphasis added.)

Another description of the self-less Clinton comes from alternative journalist Sam Smith, author of *Shadows of Hope* and editor of *Progressive Review*: "It was the normal work of the politician, but with Clinton there seemed too much. Too many hands, too many friends, too many words, too many hours before he went to sleep, too many hours on C-SPAN solving the nation's problems with too many industrialists and economists—and in the end too little else. *It was as though he were afraid that if he excused himself from the public eye he might no longer be real.*" (Emphasis added.)

Those who see Clinton as self-less are always struck by the deep dependence on others that is present in those who have a ravenous hunger for power over those others. Different journalists have sought to explain the intense response Clinton invokes, occasionally using their own reactions. Philip Martin, an Arkansas journalist, quotes his own words, written for a now-defunct alternative newspaper in Little Rock when he was young: "He is the Sun King. And if you look too long at him you will be blind, your senses flooded with his gold-spined brilliance. As e.e. cummings might have said of him, *Jesus, he is a handsome man.* Despite his too-big head and hands and feet and his roomy, rheumy allergy-ridden nose. There must be some elemental undercurrent here that generates envy in other men, not just the musk of power but something pheromonic. Since it is not polite to compare your governor to Mussolini or even Huey Long, then let's say one of those Kennedy boys, or that rare thing, a soulful politician."

Martin now considers those "the most embarrassing words of my career." But he quotes them because he knows they provide insight into others. Martin had quite unreservedly fallen in love, as millions of others have fallen in love with Bill Clinton.

Another journalistic worshiper, Phil McCombs, writing in *The Washington Post*, holds a mirror up to Clinton as he is absorbing that love: "To watch this president connect with people emotionally is an awesome thing. It's a raw, needy, palpable, electrifying thing that happens....It's as if he's soaking up the people like he's soaking up the sun, with the warmth pouring deep and direct into his political soul and recharging him, refilling him somehow once again with his own humanity and some sense of his role in the destiny of his country."

This is an exceptionally good description of a charismatic politician feeding on the souls he has electrified. It was quoted in *The New Republic* under the sarcastic headline, "Clinton Suck-Up Watch." That was too limited an observation, although it is true that only a worshiper would use the language of McCombs. An unusually intense response to a charismatic politician should not be casually dismissed as a simple-minded form of complicity. And it also should not be described with conventional political formulae. We all have been told repeatedly that Clinton "connects" with crowds, or that he is in his "campaign mode." But such desiccated language deprives one of the politically important information that the emotion-laden language of Martin and McCombs provides.

Writing a decade and a half apart, both tell us in unmistakable terms that the South has thrown up yet another of its emotionally gifted demagogues—those eloquent politicians who intuitively exploit the hopes and fears of mobs, who win their love and legitimize their hatreds. The new eloquent southerner—his style adapted to the small screen, his charged emotions unfailingly politically correct—is sitting in the White House.

Clinton has true charisma. If you have not witnessed that quality first-hand—I myself have seen it only once—you don't quite know what it is. It is not just charm. It is a sudden blazing internal radiance which the possessor learns to produce volitionally and in full, conscious awareness of its seductive effect.

Clinton has the power to seduce others, to get them to submit to his will. And when they do, they give him in turn the vision he seeks. What Clinton sees in the faces of the adoring crowds is the reflected face of the Sun King. Only those adoring crowds can give this Narcissus the ineffable joy of adoring himself.

Have any journalists raised questions about the real political purposes of such a man? Yes, but only couched in terms of sincerity. The disappointed and angry left, the most radical of the environmentalists, the iconoclasts who inhabit the edges of the American political spectrum—all have raised the questions: Is Clinton really moved by a love of social justice? When he made his pledges to rescue the poor and the suffering, was he sincere? What does he stand for?

In *Shadows of Hope*, Sam Smith gives his reasons for doubting Clinton's sincerity: "Clinton often seems a political Don Juan, whose serial affairs with economic and social programs share only the transitory passion he exhibits on their behalf."

Smith is right. The programs, the "issues," are America's obligatory means of political courtship. But for a Sun King, these

are means to his end. And his only real end is seduction. *That* is what Clinton stands for.

Sam Smith's language tells the reader that he is aware of this. *Newsweek*'s Joe Klein, in "The Politics of Promiscuity," (May 9, 1994) seems for an instant to have suspected it. Christopher Hitchens of *The Nation* has been in a cold rage about it. These men have strikingly different political views. The realization that Clinton is most fundamentally a political seduction machine is not dependent on ideology but on sensibility, and on the intelligence to look past his liberal-altruistic language and to question Clinton's personal values.

Finally, also raising questions about Clinton's psychology are the pillars of establishment journalism and the academic students of the presidency. These are extremely intelligent and judicious people who acknowledge no signs of a Sun King's presence and who judge Clinton by the standards set by the great American presidents. They are concerned with psychological issues pertaining to Clinton's mind, above all to his cognitive competence.

A few examples will do: At the end of Clinton's first year in office, David Broder of *The Washington Post* was worrying about Clinton's habit of launching too many policy initiatives at once, many more than he could handle, and his tendency to go rushing around in all directions. Hedrick Smith of PBS was disturbed by a related issue—Clinton's inability to set priorities. And Fred I. Greenstein, professor of politics at Princeton University and author of two classic books on the American presidency, was praising Clinton's "verbal intelligence" but wanted to know whether Clinton had an "analytical intelligence." This was an unusual question. The Princeton scholar was actually saying, Clinton can talk, but can he think?

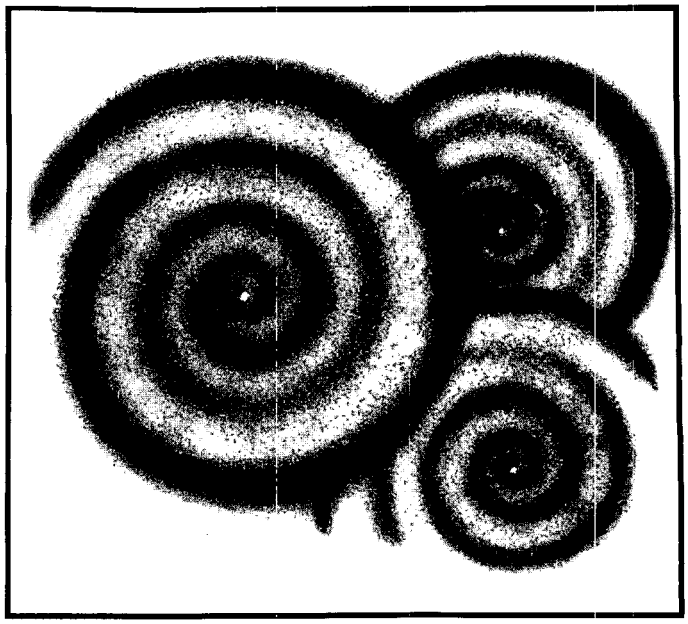
However different all the questions above may seem to be—from "Does he have a self?" to "Can he think?"—their similarities are greater than their differences. All the questions are psychological in nature and all the questioners are staring fixedly at Clinton's consciousness. Most of the people quoted above have expressed admiration for Clinton, and most probably voted for him. But all have clearly worried about one or another aspect of Clinton's mind.

There is a good deal to worry about.

Thinking

On June 7, 1994, Bob Woodward was interviewed on C-SPAN about *The Agenda*. The discussion moved to Hillary Clinton, and Woodward said in emphatic tones, "I'd go so far as to say she's a part of Bill Clinton's brain."

That is both the most extreme and the most accurate description of Hillary Clinton that anyone has yet offered. It is the only reason for which Hillary Clinton is a significant American figure. She has been flattered by the feminist movement, which, like *New York Times* columnist Anna Quindlen, imagines her to have a "great mind." She has been abused by certain conservatives who, like Richard Nixon, believe that such an intelligent, self-assertive woman turns her husband into a "wimp." Both those characterizations miss the mark. Hillary is a bright woman lawyer of the kind one sees by the dozens on CNN and C-SPAN, only they have earned their positions while she has married hers.



TROY THOMAS

Her actual importance lies in one realm alone. She is known to be a prop to her husband's mind, and her husband is president of the United States.

To an inordinate degree Hillary Clinton *thinks* for Bill Clinton.

Specifically, she is Bill Clinton's access to the laws of logic, without which no thinking is possible. Leon Wieseltier of *The New Republic* has discussed Clinton's blindness to logic on a number of occasions. On February 1, 1993, he wrote, "The most disturbing quality about Clinton...is his indifference to contradiction. Not excluding the political middle by not excluding the logical middle, that appears to be Clinton's strategy. And so he can hold in his mind simultaneously, and sincerely, notions that cannot really be held together." And, again in the July 19–26, 1993 issue: "He lives without the law of contradiction."

Hillary Clinton provides Clinton with certain narrow logical skills of which he is singularly bereft. This does not imply that she is Aristotle, any more than a seeing-eye dog is a cartographer. It implies only that as compared to Clinton, the blazing Bubba, Mrs. Clinton is on speaking terms with logic, and he cannot function without her.

Some White House reporters have gradually discovered this dependence. Initially they saw Hillary as a helpful adjunct to presidential decision making. Just after the election, Eleanor Clift and Mark Miller said in *Newsweek*, "Hillary is Bill's Daytimer, the gentle lash who keeps him focused, who doesn't mind making decisions and refereeing disputes when Clinton would rather stall." This description is a bit too soft. Take out the "gentle" and the "doesn't mind," and you have a clearer picture of a Hillary who keeps Bill's mind focused, who makes his decisions, and who resolves his conflicts.

Six months later, in late June 1993, at the peak of the Clintons' bizarre succession of political catastrophes, Eleanor Clift returned to Hillary to answer the question, "Has health care kept her from helping Bill?" Clift's answer was an unequivocal yes: "[Many staffers] blame Clinton's inability to make up his mind on any number of issues—from Bosnia to the BTU tax—on

Hillary's distance from the Oval Office. Clinton's decision to delegate health care to his wife disrupted the delicate balance between the couple. Because Hillary has a real job, she cannot devote the time she once did to her husband's problems. And he has suffered as a result."

And nine months later, in March 1994 as the sex and money scandals were exploding over the Clintons' heads, *Time* published an article called "The Trials of Hillary." It was written by Nancy Gibbs, and all impulse to soften Hillary had vanished. Rather, with the first lady under fire, it was necessary to make her importance clear. Gibbs cited people close to the Clintons as the source for a crisp description of the essence of Bill Clinton's dependency on Hillary: "Their friends observed that he needs her brains, her logic, her focus..."

That is undoubtedly true. But it cannot be the whole truth. One can readily purchase brains, logic, and focus in the marketplace. One does not have to marry them. For Clinton, a wife with brains, logic, and focus serves a deeper need. In a particular and important way, Bill Clinton is cognitively disabled.

There is nothing obvious about that disability, although its superficial manifestations strike many people immediately: If one concentrates on what Clinton says, not on his facial expressions and the motions of his poetic hands, one discovers that he is a phenomenal bore. He is so monumentally boring that thoughtful people feel compelled to discuss it.

Tom Rosenstiel of the *Los Angeles Times* writes in *Strange Bedfellows* that he considers Clinton an intellectual and a "scholar" but finds his oratory flat and lacking in drama and poetry. Historian James MacGregor Burns says, "Clinton's rhetoric is absolutely lacking in spark and, well, in style. So much of it is banal." *Time*'s Hugh Sidey says that Clinton is "tedious to a fault, thorough, bright, highly educated but excruciatingly dull at times."

And *The New Republic*'s Leon Wieseltier explains why: "His seriousness seems to consist...in a combination of ambition and pedantry. There is something spiritually thin about Clinton. Finally, his constant talk—at last we have a president who speaks in sentences, but all the time—leaves only an impression of articulateness. Detail has mastered him as much as he has mastered detail."

That is the clue to Clinton's cognitive disability. There is only one thing that will produce this detail-saturated effect, enlivened by no thinking or creative impulse, and that is the memorization one frantically engages in before an exam if one is the bright kind who studies for As.

Is Clinton a memorizer? Yes, indeed he is. And a very unusual one, the type who could get a job in the circus as a Hans the Talking Horse. He has a photographic memory, and witnesses to that skill come from every period of his life. When David Gallen, armed with a tape recorder, interviewed a few dozen Arkansas journalists, politicians, and friends and associates of Bill, they all talked their heads off about his amazing memory for the faces, names, family members, and illnesses of what seems to be half of Arkansas.

And, apparently, he forgets nothing. In January 1994 David Maraniss of *The Washington Post* wrote: "Clinton has a nearly photographic memory—he recently stunned a friend visiting the White House by saying, 'Let's call your parents!' and then recited a number he hadn't dialed in more than a decade."

Before he was elected president, Clinton himself liked to show off his remarkable memory. According to Charles Allen and Jonathan Portis in *The Comeback Kid*, Clinton recited 100 lines from *Macbeth* that he had learned in high school to a high school class in the small town of Vilonia, Arkansas: "I hadn't [recited] it in 20-something years," Clinton said. "And I started reeling it off, and these kids, their eyes got as big as dollars. I recited the whole soliloquy."

But this skill is more than a complicated parlor trick. It has played an important role in Clinton's intellectual life. Clinton has always been extremely bright, a good student and a voracious reader. But his memory has greatly supplemented, amplified, and very often substituted for an intellectual life. His memory is a theme that runs throughout people's conversations about him.

Arkansas journalist Meredith Oakley, who repeatedly refers to Clinton's photographic memory throughout her book *On the Make: The Rise of Bill Clinton*, says of Clinton, "He was not studious by nature and though he made exceptional grades—he eventually won a Phi Beta Kappa key—he did so by routinely cramming for exams and relying on a photographic memory."

Clinton's classmate at Yale, William P. Coleman, calls Clinton "the classic quick study." He studied little, went to few classes. Then before exams he borrowed the class notes of others and memorized.

Clinton's high school friend David Leopoulos visited Clinton when he was at Oxford and found that Clinton had suddenly become a fount of information about painting. Leopoulos told a reporter, "He is interested in everything and wants to consume everything. He is almost a fanatic about information. He gathers and retains it better than anyone I've ever known."

Joel Achenbach of *The Washington Post* jokes, "That's Clinton: well-versed in every subject, has memorized the leading economic indicators for every quarter since the '20s, knows how to say 'fungibility' in Farsi."

Finally, Charles Allen and Jonathan Portis in *The Comeback Kid* describe the Clinton of the presidential campaign: "Clinton became known as a 'policy wonk,' a politician who could spout data and statistics nonstop, a man with a quick answer for every question. Members of the national press were amazed at his ability to formulate answers to complicated questions, seemingly without thinking."

It is not "seemingly" without thinking. Very often, it is actually without thinking. Clinton can memorize as he breathes. But he finds thinking—analysis, evaluation, reaching conclusions—intensely difficult.

And that is the essence of Bill Clinton's cognitive disability, and the reason for his dependence on his wife.

In *The Agenda*, Woodward shows that dependence in action. He describes Clinton as candidate, surrounded by high-powered advisers. "Everyone," writes Woodward, "was throwing ideas at the candidate, who had no system to evaluate

or decide among them." It was Hillary who rescued Clinton, and in doing so, explained what he actually did with the information being hurled at him. He had to "come to it in his own way," she said. Woodward continued: "Hillary insisted he had to 'internalize' the message and the ideas. He needed in-depth exposure to the alternatives and lively debate, pushed even to the point of confusion. 'He has to come to this in his own way,' she repeated." What Clinton needed, she said, was the time to rest and "internalize."

In effect, Clinton dumps everything into his subconscious, engulfs it, digests it, and waits to see what will happen. Many people do this at certain stages of creative work, which is dependent on subconscious operations. But at some point, the mental superstructure must take control and process the results with logic.

It is the stage that requires the conscious use of logic that Clinton finds difficult, or impossible, to reach.

To an extraordinary degree, Clinton functions directly from his subconscious. It is his almost-photographic memory that allows him to do so. But he pays a terrible penalty. When ideas are "thrown" at him, which happens ceaselessly, he "has no system to evaluate or decide among them." He is paralyzed—until his subconscious finally processes them in one way or another, and tells him what to think. And if it doesn't, his wife does. That one cannot buy in the marketplace.

It is true that Hillary Clinton helps Bill Clinton in his presidential decision-making process. It is true that he needs her brains, her logic, and her focus. But any formulation that makes her sound like hired help fails to reckon with the frequency with which Clinton is incapacitated. Hillary Clinton compensates for that helpless state. She is to Clinton's mind what a pacemaker is to a heart. She is, as Woodward says, a part of Bill Clinton's brain. And she has been so for every millisecond of his political life.

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THE FIRST CONFLICT

"Even now, after all these years, I still sometimes work hard instead of smart. I'm a workaholic, I'm always churning and doing things, and sometimes I lose the forest for the trees. Sometimes you can do so many things that you don't do enough ...[P]eople may not know exactly what I want to do as president, because I've got so many ideas.

"My mind is always churning, you know, and I think I need to learn to focus my comments better so I can learn to communicate with people who don't know me very well. And I need to always learn that you have so little time, there is so precious little time, that you have to really be like a laser beam with your words and your actions. You've got to really focus and have that kind of mental discipline that sometimes my workaholic tendencies don't permit me to have....

"I think sometimes I always think that everything can be worked out, too, you know. Sometimes you can't work everything out. You've just got to cut it. And you've got to know when to cut it and when to work things out. That's something I've done a lot of work on, trying to make sure I overcome that weakness."

—Bill Clinton to Arsenio Hall, June 1992

For some 15 years Clinton has been saying, over and over again, to people who have repeated it over and over again, that his problem is that he does "too much, too fast." Simultaneously, he has been ceaselessly reported to be an astoundingly slow worker who takes months to make a decision. Both cannot be true. And both are not true. But it takes a long time to understand the gross contradiction between what Clinton says of himself and what the press has reported, because the answer is buried in a mysterious conflict deep inside Clinton's mind.

Above, you will see a long and unfocused description by candidate Clinton of the workings of his own mind. He offered this information to talk-show host Arsenio Hall, who had inquired whether Clinton had any flaws.

A small part of Clinton's incoherent description pertains to his doing "too much, too fast." The rest, if one strips away the murky verbiage, is an earnest description of Clinton's difficulty in thinking. His mind races, ideas rush in on him with great speed; he fails to distinguish between having an idea and taking an action, between thinking and doing; he gets lost in details, so he cannot retain his abstract purposes; and he has great difficulty in reaching conclusions or making decisions. He even avoids using such terms: He talks of "cutting it" or of "working things out." This is not the analysis of a thinker or of one who thinks about thinking. It is the Clinton subconscious blurting out his difficulties as he experiences them from within.

Woodward's *Agenda*—this book is to date the greatest psychological study of Bill Clinton—portrays Clinton's helpless, conflicted muddle over and over again. But in one part, there is a

short, efficient description. Political consultant Stan Greenberg traveled to Arkansas to meet the young governor who might seek the Democratic party's nomination for president. He found Clinton torn by conflict over announcing his candidacy:

"[Clinton] set August as a personal deadline for a final decision, but the deadline slipped....He appeared locked in a perpetual debate and argument with himself and with dozens of friends and advisors. His thinking never seemed to go in a straight line. He was unable to bring his deliberations to any resolution. Greenberg was horrified at the process. It bordered on chaos."

Greenberg is clearly describing from the outside what Bill Clinton described to Arsenio Hall from the inside.

The rambling speech that Clinton made to the talk-show host is a template both for Clinton's endlessly reiterated lament that he does "too much, too fast" and for the chaotic mental processes that wander off in meaningless directions and culminate in paralysis. To describe what it might feel like to be engaged in both kinds of mental activities, one must conjure up an impossibility. It would be like driving at full speed with one's feet jammed hard on powerful brakes. Clinton's mind races perpetually while it simultaneously maneuvers itself into a catatonic motionlessness.

Clinton has a short phrase to describe only the speeded-up process: It is doing "too much, too fast." He has no descriptive phrase for the blocking process, so I'll give him one: It's "I can't move."

He presses his speeded-up problem on everyone he talks to at any length, so it is widely known. He allows others to discover the blockage problem all by themselves. But, of course, that problem is widely known too. The press discovered it soon after he was elected president. In fact, to a considerable degree, Clinton's relationship with reporters has been an attempt to seduce them by stressing "I do too much, too fast" while they have tormented him by chasing angrily after his "I can't move." To visit Clinton's mind, one must take these aspects of his mental processes one at a time.

"Too Much, Too Fast"

Clinton began to complain publicly that he tries to do "too much, too fast" when he lost the governor's race in 1980 after one term in office. In his first interview after this defeat, he named the problem as a cause.

But when one reads Meredith Oakley's biography *On the Make*, one discovers that Clinton had the "too much, too fast" problem long before the traumatic expulsion. Oakley places no significance whatsoever on this fact. But it is clearly important.

Right after he was elected governor for the first time and before he had even moved into his office, says Oakley, Clinton made a curious pledge to the electorate. It was reported by the Associated Press and she summarizes it as follows: "He said he planned to take a judicious approach to governing and to try not to do everything at once."

Neither the AP nor Oakley thought to ask Clinton why the impossible notion of doing everything at once had even occurred to him and why he would "try" not to do this impossible thing. Would the impossible thing happen anyway if he did not "try"?

Too Much Too Fast

Clinton in 1980, two weeks after he was kicked out of office after one term as governor: "I think maybe I gave the appearance of trying to do too many things and not involving the people as I should." (*The Hillary Factor*)

Patty Howe Criner, former aide in Arkansas: "...and he went in and he tried to do too much." (*The Comeback Kid*)

Judith Warner, author of *Hillary Clinton*: "Bill Clinton wanted only to get back on the hustings and run for office again....[H]e realized that he had tried to do too much during his first two years in office. Next time he would set a simple agenda..."

Clinton, on the eve of the Arkansas Democratic primary in 1982: "I made a young man's mistake. I had an agenda a mile long....I was so busy doing what I wanted to do I didn't have time to correct mistakes." (*As They Know Him*)

Meredith Oakley, author of *On the Make*: "[Hillary Clinton's] primary observation was that Clinton had had too many priorities. He had tried to do so much so quickly that there was no reform with which he had been identified."

Clinton, after his election in 1982: "[I]f you do a lot of things, and you talk about a lot of different things while you're doing it, the perception may be that you haven't done anything." (*On the Make*)

Clinton, on the Clinton-Gore bus tour's stop in Louisville, Kentucky, July 1992: "My biggest weakness is that I tend to work too hard so sometimes I don't work smart enough. And I see all these problems and it drives me crazy that we're not solving them, and if I'm not careful I'll try and do too much."

Clinton, when his poll ratings crashed after his first three months as president, 1993: "I do think I overextended myself, and we've got to focus on the big things." (*On the Make*)

Jack Watson, in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Summer 1993: "Ironically, the biggest problem for Mr. Clinton may be that he is too well informed on too many subjects and wants to accomplish too many things too soon."

Eleanor Clift, White House correspondent for *Newsweek*, 1993: "He is passionate about some issues but he's a master of digression. He wants to do it all and he has a hard time harnessing everything into a single achievable goal. That's where Hillary comes in. She's much better at that. He doesn't know where the boundaries are in an issue. He wants to do it all." (*As They Know Him*)

On the surface, the new governor of Arkansas never kept his pledge. The biographies record that he always governed in Arkansas with all flags flying and an agenda as long as his arm. But the primary purpose of the enormous agenda was to create the *illusion* of immense achievement through nonstop activity. Clinton scheduled matters, says Oakley, so that he could launch one initiative a week and keep his name in the headlines. Many, if not most, of those achievements never materialized, or they were drastically altered by the Arkansas legislature.

After Clinton was defeated, he made such a big issue out of "too much, too fast" and apologized so humbly to the people of Arkansas for his mistake that, when years later he ran for the presidency, the phrase was still on people's lips. David Gallen, researching *Bill Clinton: As They Know Him*, heard it frequently. Brownie Ledbetter, a prominent activist in Arkansas reform politics, told Gallen about the warning that Betsey Wright had delivered to Clinton. Wright, who organized Clinton's campaign for reelection to the governorship, told Clinton, "You will pick three things and that's it. You're not going to do a hundred and fifty things. And you've got to be focused."

When Clinton ran for the presidency he again set out with great brio to do "too much, too fast." He hit Americans hard with a 49-point plan for economic revival—adding 10 new planks to a platform he filched from Dukakis.

And, once elected, Clinton not only wanted to show Americans that he could do everything at once—he wanted to show them that he could think about everything at once. He held the famous economic "summit" where, surrounded by television cameras and legions of properly respectful economists, policy specialists, and business executives, Clinton demonstrated that he knew as much about each of their specializations as they did. He had learned and spat out a fragment of each. The public was impressed. The press was impressed. Hillary was impressed. She took notes.

And there began the regime of Clinton I, which was for many months thereafter to lurch around in drunken confusion, because the man who could do everything at once and could know everything at once had just arrived from a tiny, almost-feudal state that he could govern with a Rolodex of 100 names, and had no idea what it meant to be president of the United States of America.

Throughout all the lurching and crises and embarrassments, however, Clinton kept proliferating proposed programs and issues and trying to do "too much, too fast." Finally, a clever journalist noticed that the issues were a cave in which Clinton was hiding. In *Newsweek*, February 15, 1993, Eleanor Clift observed:

"As the political hurricanes raged around him, Bill Clinton sought safety in substance. Let the media talk about Kimba and Zoë and gays in the military. Clinton was busy with issues, at least one a day. That is his way of changing the subject....But the issues may not provide safe haven for long. Now he must turn his attention to the thorniest issue of all, [the economy,] where he faces seemingly contradictory goals."

In fact, Clinton's relentless multiplying of issues began to seem comical to some. A few months later, *The Washington Post Weekly* published a Margulies cartoon on that theme. It was drawn in two boxes. Box 1 showed Clinton seated in front of a desk piled with documents, saying, "Maybe I *have* been trying to do too much..." Box 2 showed Clinton saying, "So I'm appointing a 60-member commission to hold six months of hearings and issue a 12-volume report on rescuing my presidency."

Now here you can stop for a moment, because Clinton stopped for a moment. For some months, all the issues came in great baskets called the budget and NAFTA and Japanese trade and so on. Since politics is an epiphenomenon in this article, we will skip over what was a reasonably pleasant period in which a newly hired Republican spinmeister, David Gergen, who had helped to create and peddle the New Nixon, was now creating and peddling the New Clinton.

At the end of 1993, it came time for leading journalists to ponder the year's events and to ask Clinton to ponder the year's events. An interview with Clinton was conducted by Eleanor Clift, Bob Cohn, and Jonathan Alter of *Newsweek* and published December 13, 1993. About that same time, David Broder in *The Washington Post* (December 12, 1993) reported on a group interview with Clinton assembled at Blair House by Godfrey Sperling Jr. of the *Christian Science Monitor*. These able and sophisticated journalists were genuinely interested in finding out what Clinton—the New Clinton—had learned during the year.

The group interview published in *Newsweek* occupied a full page. Nine questions were published, three of which asked Clinton to comment on declining public support and on criticisms of his character, his temper, and his performance. He evaded the criticisms. Instead, he defensively introduced and elaborated on these ideas:

- "[W]e were trying to move very quickly to push the agenda of change."
- "I tried to do so many things at once that I didn't take time to do one of the President's most important jobs, and that is to consistently explain to the American people what we were doing and why."
- "What upsets me is when I think we're not doing the best we can for the country. When I lose my temper it's mostly because I think we all have an obligation to make every day count."

The sympathetic headline printed along the top of the *Newsweek* page was: "I tried to do so many things."

Broder devoted his complete *Post* column to what Clinton had told the journalistic group at Blair House. Under the triumphant title "Clinton Finds His Voice," Broder wrote: "In a recent interview in which I participated, Clinton said that because the nation is now 'awash in news,' he must work harder at this task than presidents of the previous generation had to do. That means, he said, that he must figure out what are the 'five or six things or two or three things the American people have to know and feel' and 'not do or say things that get in your way' in communicating on those topics. And it means that he must be willing to return to those topics time and again, until he hits the moment when 'You can break through. When you can register on people.'"

Broder was impressed. He said, "For a president who is as hyperactive as Clinton, this is a remarkably disciplined set of self-

instructions....[T]he lesson of this first year—which Clinton seems to have absorbed—is that you cannot do everything at once."

The New Clinton was the Old Clinton. The two sets of interviewers had all been listening to the same strange recording in Clinton's head, unreeling slowly, slowly, upon demand, producing the same verbal patterns that had been emerging from Clinton's mouth for at least 15 years.

Any idea that a human being feels compelled to repeat robotically for at least 15 years means something important to that person. But what "too much, too fast" means is not what Clinton says it means. And there is no evidence that he knows what it means. It is clearly a defense of some kind. But a defense against what?

It may become clearer if we turn now to the Clinton who cannot resolve conflicts, the Clinton who is blocked, the Clinton who gets paralyzed while trying to think. What the racing, speeding Clinton cannot tell us, perhaps the paralyzed Clinton will.

"I Can't Move"

The Clinton who "can't move" is, of course, Clinton the potential Democratic party nominee who revealed to political consultant Stan Greenberg that he couldn't "think in a straight line," and couldn't resolve conflicts or reach conclusions. It is Clinton the presidential candidate who told Arsenio Hall that he had these strange thinking problems he was "working on"—that he often couldn't "see the forest for the trees"; that he often didn't know when to "cut it" and when to go on trying to "work things out"; and who revealed to Arsenio that he didn't differentiate between thinking, saying, and doing "things."

Why there was no uproar among American journalists after Clinton's confession to Arsenio Hall, I do not know, since I personally fell off the couch when I heard it. But it is only fair to say that it was difficult to understand on the fly. Clinton's use of language reveals a determination to conceal the operations of his mind in a cloud of squid ink. By his fifth month in office, however, there was widespread awareness that something was the matter with Clinton's decision-making process. *The New York Times* developed a fixation on his lack of "focus." *Harper's* Editor Lewis Lapham, who counts things that annoy him, reported that in the month of May the words *Clinton* and *focus* appeared in *The New York Times* 102 times.

In the May 31, 1993 issue, *The New Republic* published an analysis of Clinton's decision making. The editors were trying to account for Clinton's paralysis and, interestingly, contradicted Clinton's claim that it was due to "too much, too fast":

"The incorrigible Eugene McCarthy put it best, in a recent trip to these offices. The Clinton administration is turning out to be all gerunds; there are no nouns or verbs. Everything is process: happening, formulating, consulting, negotiating, evolving ....[T]he only moment when the president actually seemed to *do* something that had a beginning, a middle, and an end was his signing of the executive orders liberalizing abortion. And what a long time ago that seems....

"It is not that he has tried to do too much, as he [has] somewhat lamely claimed. Far from it....It is that he has failed to find

Too Much Too Fast

Tom Matthews, *Newsweek*, May 1993: "No one doubts his formidable mind or capacity for absorbing detail; but at times it appears as if he is trying to do too much too soon—and all at the same time—stretching himself far too thin."

Tom Morgenthau, *Newsweek*, May 1993: "The administration has fallen well short of its hope of unveiling a health-care plan this spring. That is partly because of the crush of pending business on Capitol Hill, and partly because the president, by his own admission, has spread himself too thin. 'What I think we need to do, frankly, is to get the focus back on the things I have been working on from the beginning,' Clinton conceded last week."

Hobart Rowen, *The Washington Post*, May 1993: "Clinton has acknowledged the need to 'refocus' his overall legislative strategy with a set of clearly identifiable priorities."

Clinton at a Cleveland shopping mall, May 1993: "We've got a lot of complicated problems and I know—I knew when I got there it wasn't going to happen overnight. I tried to make it happen overnight. I've been criticized for doing more than one thing at once. I've always felt—can you do one thing at once? Can you do—wouldn't it be nice if all you had to do was go to work and not take care of your family? Wouldn't it be nice if you could pay your bills and not earn any money to pay them? I don't understand this whole—you can't do one thing at once. But anyway, that's what they say."

James M. Perry, *The Wall Street Journal*, June 1993: "By contrast, says [Princeton University's Fred] Greenstein, Mr. Clinton's mind is 'filled with exciting ideas, and he's eager to talk about all of them. But what he seems to lack is some kind of narrowing mechanism, some way to sort them all out. He doesn't have a set of simple priorities.'"

New York Times White House Correspondent Gwen Ifill, *Face the Nation*, August 1993: "The administration has a problem with focus....It careens from one issue to another."

Ann Devroy, *The Washington Post*, November 1993: "By the beginning of this month, the Clinton team, armed with new numbers, was into damage control. The president says that maybe he and his team were trying to do too many things at once and confusing the country."

Eleanor Clift and Bob Cohn, *Newsweek*, November 1993: "By now, everyone knows the script. Trying to do too much at once....Clinton's top aides are beginning to wonder if this is any way to run a presidency. They are tired of lurching from crisis to crisis, and they know that Clinton will not accomplish his most ambitious goal—health-care reform—

a distinction between constructing a policy and implementing it. It is one long, seamless process of negotiation—intellectual and political—in which there seems to be no firm stopping place."

The New Republic had discovered that Clinton could not distinguish between thinking and doing and could not resolve his deliberations.

It was not, however, until one year later, in the publications I read regularly, that someone almost reached Stan Greenberg's horrifying conclusion. On May 17, 1994, Richard Cohen wrote in *The Washington Post* that Clinton left "the unmistakable impression of a president who cannot state a goal and then simply march to it." Cohen was still a bit unsure of his own discovery that Clinton could not think purposefully.

In the year in between, journalists zeroed in on Clinton's inability to reach a final decision—his last-minute "flip-flopping." And they trumpeted their observations to the skies. This criticism produced a dramatic and informative clash between Clinton and the press. On June 14, 1993, after three months of changing his mind about a Supreme Court nominee, Clinton finally succumbed to the forces advocating Ruth Bader Ginsburg and presented her to guests and press in a televised ceremony in the Rose Garden. Clinton spoke. Judge Ginsburg spoke. Clinton then turned to the press. Brit Hume of ABC rose to his feet and asked a question: What had caused the protracted "zigzag quality" in the nomination process? Hume knew, the press knew, Clinton knew, and an untold number of citizens knew, that Hume was actually asking Clinton a personal question: Why are you so indecisive? Clinton displayed a cold, controlled anger, chastised the press for being more interested in "political process" than in "substance," and abruptly terminated the press conference, leaving Hume standing there, six feet tall and bright red.

The next day, the country was informed that the president had more to say. Wolf Blitzer, CNN's White House reporter, told his worldwide audience that the president was going to hold a press conference at which he would discuss his achievements to show that he'd been "decisive and in control." The press conference began. Clinton appeared. He listed some legislation and announced to the nation—in the hearing of the world—that his had been "the most decisive presidency you've had in a very long time, on all the big issues that matter."

The reporters of course knew that this was a lie, whether they said so or not. It was not clear that they had understood the important truth that Clinton was telling them by lying—that he could not endure any mention of his indecisiveness.

Clinton kept snapping angrily at the consultants that he wanted a "strategy," a "plan." Says Woodward, "Clinton wanted something concrete." It is a remarkable fact that the political consultants to President Clinton think far more abstractly than he does and can easily explain his priorities to him. But to Clinton, only the concrete is real. Abstractions have no reality—and that is to say that his presidency's themes and goals have no reality. But without them he cannot set priorities.

It seems unlikely that they understood that truth, because there was no muting of the crescendo of criticism of Clinton's indecisiveness. During May, June, and July 1993, the criticism came from voices at every point on the establishment spectrum—from such journalistic luminaries as Cokie Roberts, Elizabeth Drew, Anthony Lewis, Hobart Rowen, and Judy Woodruff. Even *The Washington Post*'s E. J. Dionne, who normally would not notice if Clinton turned into a werewolf, conceded in the 16th paragraph of a 17-paragraph column that Clinton was indecisive.

On September 17, 1993, David Shaw, media critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, criticized the press for unfairly berating Clinton for his indecisiveness. Nevertheless, Shaw himself described that indecisiveness with disdainful accuracy: "Decision making is an excruciating process for Clinton. He almost invariably seems determined to delay a final decision for as long as possible. He likes to ponder publicly all his options, consult people, make a decision, consult anew, change his mind, then change it again. He's a veritable symphony of equivocation."

America's leading journalists were agitated by the very idea of an indecisive president. Since deciding things is nine-tenths of what an American president is supposed to do, their agitation was comprehensible.

A few people, however, thought the president's indecisiveness was funny. They were politically mismatched. One was Jeffrey Klein, editor in chief of the leftist *Mother Jones* and a Clinton supporter. He erupted in a fit of charming giggles when, invited by C-SPAN to comment on Clinton, he heard himself saying that "Clinton never makes up his mind." Another was Paul Greenberg, conservative editorial page editor of the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* and the creator of the sobriquet Slick Willie. Greenberg was not a giggler, but he was consumed by dry humor. He, too, appeared on C-SPAN to twinkle his eye and to state enigmatically that he had not expected "it" to happen so soon.

He explained what he meant in a column which appeared in *The Washington Times* titled "Déjà Vu All Over Again." Greenberg discussed the astonishment and indignation of both Demo-

cratic congressmen and journalists over "the Clinton two-step." It was "still a novelty in Washington," he said, but was quite familiar to anyone who had spent the last two decades in Arkansas. "They don't understand," he said. "This may be the first time they've seen Bill Clinton step out boldly, then fade away while explaining how decisive he's been."

And somewhere in Arkansas there was a horse laugh, possibly attributable to former *Gazette* columnist John Brummett, who had said during the campaign that Bill Clinton was not presidential timber, that he was "timid, indecisive, wishy-washy, and a chameleon who tries too hard to get everyone to love him."

There is no evidence that the liberal establishment press learned from their Arkansas colleagues that Clinton's indecisiveness was a problem of at least 20 years' duration. Had they learned that, their question would have been, "Why?" not "What?" But they chased diligently after the what. *Newsweek*'s White House correspondents, writing in different combinations, took turns describing the phenomenon:

- In May 1993, Clinton was described as a "policy wonk" who wallows in details. The writers added, "Clinton will revisit a decision so often that at times he seems like a gardener who uproots his plants to see how they are growing."
- In early June, *Newsweek* writers referred, with a mixture of friendliness and harshness, to Clinton's "love of detail and obsessive inability to make final decisions."
- At the end of June, Bob Cohn devoted an entire article to the subject. It was called "Decisions, Decisions." In it, Cohn summed up *Newsweek*'s now-clear dislike of the phenomenon: "No one can undecide a decision quite as often as Bill Clinton....Clinton has had to abandon his grand ideas because he lacks the discipline to make hard choices. The president's three-month search for a Supreme Court justice typifies his tendency towards vacillation. It is more than yet another bungled appointment, it is a case study of the overreaching and dithering that has left Clinton's friends dangling and disappointed his followers."

Newsweek, of course, was not unique. The entire country was being deluged with journalistic criticism of Clinton's indecisiveness. As June turned into July, various polls revealed that, as Bill Schneider of CNN put it, "Clinton's image was wavering and indecisive."

Just as it had become universally known that Clinton tried to do "too much, too fast," so did it become universally known that Clinton was indecisive.

Déjà Vu All Over Again

And what happened when everyone in the country knew this? Everyone in the country forgot it. Just as "too much, too fast" vanished at this time, so did indecisiveness vanish. The New, ostensibly decisive, Clinton had arrived. Frightened to death by the possibility of rejection, Clinton begged and bribed Democrats shamelessly to pass his budget. When it passed by one vote in the Senate he declared: "The margin was close but the mandate is clear." He wrapped himself in a protective cloak woven of living presidents and, rejected by a majority of liberals, passed NAFTA with the help of Republicans. How much more decisive could a liberal president be?

Too Much Too Fast

if he does not settle down....In a press conference this week, Clinton complained that one of his greatest frustrations as president is his inability to 'cut through the din of daily events' at the White House....'It's his own fault,' grumbles an adviser, recalling that when Clinton should have been publicly savoring the [NAFTA] victory he was instead trumpeting a joint fuel-efficiency project with the automakers. 'The voters cannot figure out what's important.'...White House aides talk, almost wistfully, of trying to take on a little less in the coming months....'There is a consensus that we have tried to do too much,' says a senior aide, who talks repeatedly about the need to 'slow down' and 'focus.' But already their irrepressible boss is talking about welfare reform and new initiatives on crime—not to mention winning health reform. Clinton may yet learn to pace himself. But don't hold your breath."

Ann Devroy and Ruth Marcus, *The Washington Post*, January 1994: "Last month James Carville, Clinton's chief campaign aide and a current political adviser, joked that the president and his aides continue to profess that they understand the need to launch only one or two major initiatives at a time. But Carville said they are 'like unreformed drunks who keep going to A.A. meetings and sittin' around the table swearing we won't do it again. Everybody knows he can't help himself and he'll be right back at the bottle again.'"

Sidney Blumenthal, "The Education of a President," *The New Yorker*, January 1994: "On the first day of his vacation on Martha's Vineyard, Clinton slept past noon; on the second, he golfed with Vernon Jordan. 'The first two or three days, I was so exhausted I didn't think much about much of anything,' the president told me. 'I'd been working awful hard. But it gave me a chance to kind of recharge my batteries and get my congenital optimism back up, and to sort of put it in a larger context. When I was on vacation I really decided that we were right to fight as hard as we did for the tough things early and to take the blows that were necessary—that the mistakes that I had made were mistakes that we could clearly correct, and didn't reflect on the character or the intelligence of the president or anybody in the White House....' As Clinton sees it, the disorganization in the White House flowed mainly from his urgency, which created an atmosphere he described as 'frantic.' He said, 'From time to time I tried to do too much at one time, get overscheduled, and that makes me late. Also if the president or if the team is too overworked and exhausted, then they may be working hard, but they're not working smart any more....'"

Richard Morin and Thomas B. Edsall, *The Washington Post*, January 1994: "Even Clinton's strongest defenders in [a focus group in] Richmond questioned whether Clinton was trying to do too much, a view held by 6 of 10 Americans surveyed nationally by the Post."

A lot more, it turned out. By the end of the year everyone rediscovered Clinton's indecisiveness. His new spinmeister David Gergen apparently leaked the fact that a new, ingenious way of solving Clinton's indecisiveness problem had been found. The December 13, 1993 issue of *Newsweek* reported dryly, "Most of the requests for private time with Clinton will not be granted, says a top aide, for fear that the president might reverse himself."

Then it was time out for frenetic coverage of Clinton's sex and money scandals before the issue of decisiveness returned. In May 1994, the press discovered to its astonishment that it was observing essentially the same phenomenon it had observed in May 1993.

- On May 14, 1994, when Clinton seemed incapable of nominating another Supreme Court justice, Al Hunt of *The Wall Street Journal* declared irritably on CNN, "Clinton has known for 134 days that he had to replace Blackmun." And Hunt sounded off about Clinton's "vacillation, indecisiveness."
- On May 23, *Newsweek* portrayed the absurdity of Clinton's "waffling" in greater detail than ever before. It gave the readers a three-day scenario: "On Wednesday the president had been about to nominate Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt when he suddenly changed his mind. On Thursday, his choice had been an old Arkansas friend, Judge Richard Arnold, but by Friday, Arnold was out and [Judge Stephen] Breyer was in. 'Let's go,' Clinton announced after yet another last minute phone call, and his staff, stung by a rash of media stories about White House dithering, rushed to carry out the presidential command. But before they could get out the door, Clinton hesitated. Maybe, he mused, he should put Maryland Sen. Paul Sarbanes on the court. That way he could elevate Baltimore's promising young black mayor, Kurt Schmoke, to the Senate." This, *Newsweek* reported, caused the president's legal counselor, Lloyd Cutler, to grow "exasperated" and to insist that Clinton decide there and then. And thus did Breyer emerge triumphant from Clinton's "maddening" decision-making process.
- In early June, Clinton again felt impelled to defend himself from the charge of indecisiveness. But this time he got someone else to do it for him. Who better than legal counselor Lloyd Cutler? So there was Cutler, who had been privately "exasperated" by Clinton's indecisiveness, explaining publicly in a long op-ed piece in *The Washington Post* that the president had not been indecisive at all, that, on the contrary, he had been wonderfully decisive.

And again a whole raft of foreign-policy issues provoked the same press charges of Clinton's indecisiveness: Bosnia had turned into Somalia had turned into Haiti, with Clinton changing his mind every hour on the hour.

Now the national press, too, realized that it was déjà vu all over again.

In June 1994, Woodward's *Agenda* appeared with a shocking passage in it. Leon Panetta, writes Woodward, had been told by campaign aides that Clinton was "deadly slow to make decisions." And then George Stephanopoulos told Panetta something far more troubling: "The worst thing about him," said Stephanopoulos, "is that he never makes a decision." Never? There it sits on page 86 of *The Agenda. Never.*

Finally, in July 1994, Michael Kelly in *The New York Times Magazine* wrote: "[I]t is no longer surprising to hear the president spoken of with open and dismissive contempt. In mainstream journalism, and even more so in popular entertainment, President Clinton is routinely depicted in the most unflattering terms: a liar, a fraud, a chronically indecisive man...." Kelly considers some of this vicious and unfair, but he does not challenge Clinton's indecisiveness. By now, not only every journalist and comic in America knows that Clinton is indecisive but dogs know it; cats know it; the readers of this magazine know it.

So why am I telling you what you already know? Because you *don't* already know it. You know a concept, "indecisive." And you know a false implication, that indecisiveness is a self-contained phenomenon, that it is like an epileptic seizure—a powerful but limited mental event which suddenly knocks Clinton out at the *end* of the decision-making process. But it doesn't start at the end, it starts at the *beginning*. And it is not a decision-making process, it is a decision-killing process. It has six component parts. At one time or another every one of them has been described, but only Woodward has integrated most of them, and that was not his primary purpose. I'll list them, elaborating on components described only by Woodward:

1. Clinton possesses a perfectionism that interferes with the completion of his projects because his standards are never met. According to Woodward, Clinton always wants to produce a solid piece of work. The sight of aides knocking out a document at high speed frightens Clinton because he knows it will not produce intellectually serious work. He wants each aspect of a project to be checked, he wants to consult people he deems to be authoritative sources, and he wants to consider a very broad range of opinion and debate.

Clinton is never satisfied with the work at any stage. Woodward describes Stephanopoulos's reaction to Clinton's unending demands: "He had seen Clinton act like this before, disliking, discarding, or wanting to change what he read. His initial reaction was always to resist, to say no, to force more discussion and debate." What is most irritating to his political advisers is his responsiveness to arguments he has not considered or to which insufficient attention has been paid. He will always want to incorporate them into his project even if they come from a political opponent.

No scholar could object to such standards. But in practice Clinton's standards are never met. The passages in *The Agenda* that portray Clinton's standards are reported by Lloyd Bentsen and by Stephanopoulos, both of whom see Clinton's unrealizable perfectionism as an expression of what Bentsen calls his intellectual "doubt."

2. Clinton is preoccupied with details to the extent that the major point of his activity is lost. This is precisely what Clinton means when he says he often can't "see the forest for the trees." It is what everyone means when he uses that expression. It means he cannot arrive at or retain the abstract purpose of a project because he is so immersed in the details.

So long as reporters admired Clinton's grasp of details, so long as they described him as "loving" the details, they did not

recognize that his preoccupation with details is an epistemologically morbid attribute and assumed that the paralysis comes later on. But it is often, perhaps always, at the very beginning of a project that Clinton loses contact with his abstract purpose.

Of the writers I have read, only Woodward seems to understand clearly that Clinton cannot hold on to the connections between his abstract purposes and the concrete details which are his daily preoccupation. One of the most dramatic sections in *The Agenda* illustrates the severity of this problem. Almost all reviewers relayed the political story without paying attention to Woodward's accompanying epistemological analysis. To put it simply, Clinton was so preoccupied with the details of the deficit-cutting aspect of his budget that he forgot the rigorous caps that Congress had placed on the "social investment" part of his budget. It was a budget resolution which, says Woodward, the president dealt with every day, but he "didn't grasp what had happened." An aide had to tell him: "Slamming his fist down on the end of his chair, Clinton let loose a torrent of rage and frustration....Why hadn't they ever had a serious discussion about the caps? Day after day, in dozens of hours in the Roosevelt Room going over the smallest programs and most trivial details, there had been no meeting, no discussion of the caps? The president turned red in the face. Why didn't they tell me? he asked. This is what I was elected for, he said. This is why I am here."

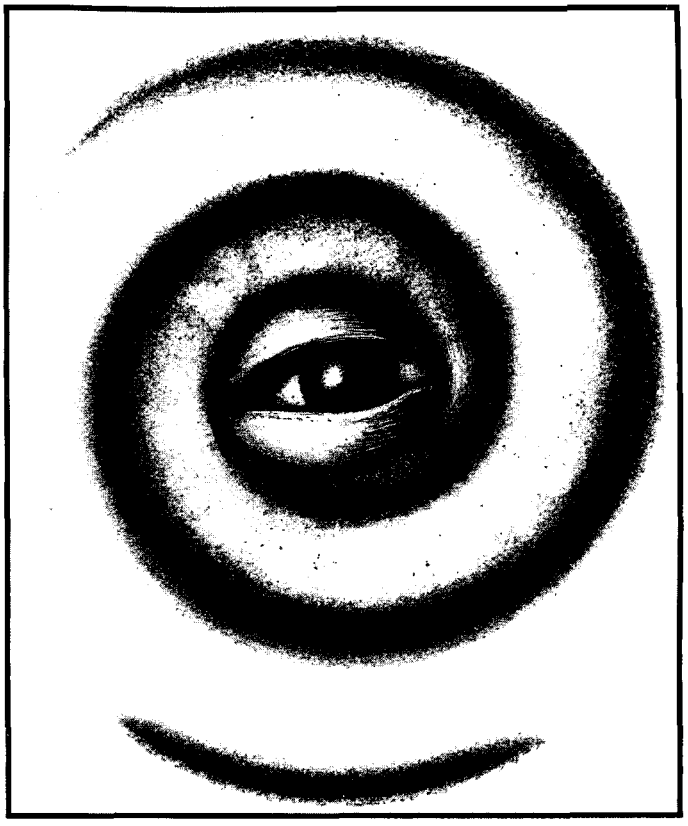
Much later, when Clinton had calmed down, he realized that he bore some responsibility in the matter: "Clinton indicated that he had never quite connected the earlier discussions of that seeming abstraction, 'caps on discretionary spending,' with their impact on his investments. He had never really fully grasped the relationship."

The "investments" were Clinton's most important purpose. He had let that abstraction float away while he was preoccupied with the "most trivial details." Clinton had been paralyzed by the harsh caps on discretionary spending, but the paralysis started the instant, the millisecond, that he severed his abstract purpose from the concrete details in which he immersed himself.

3. Clinton is unable to set priorities among his projects. Indeed, journalists and scholars have clamored incessantly that Clinton cannot set priorities. Asked Princeton scholar Fred Greenstein in *Political Science Quarterly*, "Why does an intelligent, politically aware leader who knows in his heart that he should 'focus like a laser' begin his presidency in a fashion more reminiscent of a cluster bomb?" Or, as Judy Woodruff put it anxiously to Vice President Al Gore, "Why can't he prioritize?"

This is actually the same problem as the one above but writ large. To know one's priorities, one must know their relationship to one's abstract and overarching purposes. In the case of President Clinton, he would have to know the relationship of his multiplicity of projects—all of them—to the overarching purposes and themes of his presidency. But he forgets them, too.

Woodward shows how it was Clinton's political consultants who realized that "Clinton's presidency was off the tracks in a fundamental way." Stan Greenberg grasped it first and prepared a memo for Clinton, first reviewing it with political consultants James Carville, Paul Begala, and Mandy Grunwald. The memo was dated April 20, 1993, just before the press clamor started. It



TROY THOMAS

warned Clinton, says Woodward, that he "had failed to communicate both the central values of his presidency and an organizing idea for his economic program. Side issues such as gays in the military were still getting in the way." The memo recommended that Clinton return to the plan with which he campaigned, and "recreate the vision of jobs, work and responsibility."

But Clinton, Woodward shows, did not know how to emerge from his concrete-bounded world to establish those priorities and goals for his administration or how to focus his thinking on them. Once again Woodward describes a dramatic and terrible moment. After the political consultants gave their analyses in turn to Clinton, the president erupted. "'I know what's *wrong*!' Clinton finally screamed. 'Give me a strategy.'" He wanted an outline, a plan with instructions: one, two, three. The consultants, Woodward says, continued to talk about "abstract themes, communications, values and ideas." Clinton kept snapping angrily that all he was getting from them was "analysis." What he wanted was a "strategy," a "plan." Says Woodward, "Clinton wanted something concrete."

It is a remarkable fact that the political consultants to President Clinton think far more abstractly than he does and can easily explain his priorities to him. But to Clinton, only the concrete is real, abstractions have no reality—and that is to say that his presidency's themes and goals have no reality. But without them he cannot rank his projects in importance. He cannot set priorities.

4. Clinton's decision making is avoided, postponed, or protracted. This is the phenomenon that draws the journalistic crowds. But as we have seen, the press has been primarily con-

cerned with the end of the drama—the last two or three days, even the last two or three weeks, of vacillation and indecisiveness.

But the entire period of time, often many months, spent in avoiding and postponing a decision, the time spent in sheer procrastination, cannot be severed from the phenomenon of indecisiveness.

Clinton is a spectacular procrastinator. And occasionally, in different political contexts, journalists have expressed amazement over his capacity to avoid accomplishing anything at all. Even Mary McGrory, who is a dedicated member of the choir, has expressed profound irritation over this quality. Under the headline, "Hail All Hail 'William the Procrastinator'," McGrory wrote in *The Washington Post* (May 20, 1993), "He's too compulsive not to know what's going on and too smart not to know how it looks....Connect the dots...and what you get is a picture of a president who hates to make up his mind....If he were an English king, they would be calling him 'William the Procrastinator.'"

Two weeks later in the same publication, Ann Devroy and Ruth Marcus interviewed a series of nameless White House officials about Clinton's decision-making process. Even officials who were "reluctant to blame Clinton himself...cite as fundamental problems the president's propensity to avoid decisions." Clinton, the aides assured the dubious reporters, had agreed that he must change.

Despite talk of change, nothing changed. A year later, Clinton was still procrastinating. A *Washington Post* editorial titled "Appointments Dithering" discussed his approach to various appointments and asked irascibly, "Why, in this administration, does it have to be so protracted...a process? Why can't the president just do it instead of making such a production out of it?"

From books, one learns that procrastination is in fact characteristic of every aspect of Clinton's political life. In *Bill Clinton: As They Know Him*, David Gallen reports that during his campaigns Clinton's tardiness was almost institutionalized; he was consistently an hour late. In *On the Make*, Meredith Oakley tells us he was 40 minutes late to the first joint session of the Arkansas legislature a week after his inauguration. In *Strange Bedfellows*, Tom Rosenstiel writes that during the presidential campaign everyone campaigning for Clinton managed to be on time for local satellite interviews—Mario Cuomo did 100 of them—but Clinton himself did very few: "To do local satellite interviews you had to run on time. Clinton never did." And Rosenstiel also reports that on election night, "the rejected president came out after 10 o'clock and said all the right things," but that "Clinton made them all wait past midnight, late for his own victory speech." And once in the White House, Clinton continued to be chronically late. George Stephanopoulos, to be funny, wore a black and white sticker around the White House saying, "He's running a few minutes late."

Left to his own devices, Clinton always generates chaos around him. That is what young Hillary Rodham discovered when she joined young Clinton in Arkansas as he was campaigning in his very first election in 1974. "Hillary was stunned at the absolutely anarchic lack of discipline at Clinton's headquarters. Instinctively, she stepped in and began turning things rightside up." This has been Hillary's function from that day to this. Her consciousness imposes order on Clinton's chaos.

5. Clinton's time is poorly allocated: The most important tasks are left to the last moment. You have surely read two dozen descriptions of Clinton's wild last-minute rush to decision and action when the clock or the calendar will tolerate no delay.

You may also have witnessed one such race with time. In September 1993, Clinton delivered a speech to Congress in which he presented his plan for health-care reform. He arrived at the last conceivable moment. When he began to speak, the TelePrompTer gave him the wrong speech. He had been revising, changing, writing, and rewriting his speech all day and had been deciding and undeciding what it should say until time ran out and frantic aides rushed him to the Congress. In the agitation, an aide running the TelePrompTer hit the wrong button, merging the new speech with another.

Before the mistake was corrected, Clinton spoke without the correct text for seven long minutes. His delivery was only slightly marred. He greatly impressed everyone who did not know that he was relying on an almost photographic memory.

This perpetual leaving of crucial work to the last minute is yet another integral part of Clinton's pattern of paralysis.

6. Clinton insists that others submit to exactly his way of doing things, and is reluctant to allow others to do things because of the conviction they will not do them correctly. In the first month of Clinton's administration, the press learned that Clinton refused to delegate authority. David Broder analyzed Clinton's first appointments and quoted "Clinton insiders" who observed, delicately, that the choices revealed "Clinton's intent to keep the policy reins firmly in his own hands."

Five months later, in June, *Newsweek* investigated managerial problems in the White House and reported that Secretary of State Warren Christopher and attorney Vernon Jordan had "told Clinton that the problem began with him" and urged him to delegate some of his decision-making power.

Five months after that, in November 1993, Ann Devroy reported in *The Washington Post*: "Clinton, by most accounts, wants only one person to be in charge: himself."

And Al Hunt in *The Wall Street Journal* observed that "the White House, taking its cue from its leader, is a managerial nightmare." Hunt further reported: "One of the smartest Democratic hands in this city is appalled by the president's style. 'He lacks any discipline, he hates planning or strategic thinking, and he doesn't want to be surrounded by bright, independent-thinking people.'"

A half year later came *The Agenda*, in which Woodward relayed the exact words Lloyd Bentsen had addressed to the president when he implored him to delegate more power: "I've sat beside you when somebody else is talking at one of these meetings, and I watch your eyes just fog over." Bentsen told Clinton he was passing out at meetings because he was trying to make all decisions and to go without sleep. The older man told the younger he simply had to stop. Clinton agreed sorrowfully, says Woodward, but things did not change.

Clinton's refusal to delegate authority is the final component in his paralysis. By distrusting others to live up to his standards, by insisting on holding on to all power, he turns his own disordered and exhausted consciousness into a bottleneck through which all decisions must pass—and he does this even as he flees constantly from the burden of making decisions. His mind is like a Rube Goldberg machine set to throttle itself.

This is the Clinton who, even as he complains that he does "too much, too fast," even as he blames public rejection on his "doing too much, too fast," even as he vows year after year that he will stop "doing too much, too fast," senses in some unacknowledged realm of his being that he is paralyzed and cannot move.

It is unsurprising that Clinton desperately needs Hillary's "brains, logic, and focus." He is too damaged to function without an epistemological crutch. And it is unsurprising that, while she was preoccupied with her health-care project, Clinton had another epistemological crutch with him all day long: George Stephanopoulos. In a *Time* article, April 4, 1994, Stephanopoulos's function as an epistemological support system to Clinton was clearly described. Writer David Van Biema quoted Kiki Moore, a former aide to Clinton, as saying, "George has an innate knowledge of the president's thought process." And Van Biema reported that Stephanopoulos was the president's "policy body man" who hovered near the president all day, "providing continuity and calculating each issue's relative importance."

This interesting job consisted of providing Clinton with the logical integrations he cannot perform and with the priorities he cannot identify.

Van Biema also interviewed press secretary Dee Dee Myers, who said of Stephanopoulos, "He's the place where all things come together. He is the one person...who doesn't lose the forest for the trees." Stephanopoulos has been one of the solutions to the problem Clinton confided to Arsenio Hall.

Chaos

Clinton's cognitive paralysis does not exist in a void. It exists in a context, and it is not static. It affects others, it affects Clinton himself, and ultimately it affects his presidency. The most visible effect, which has appalled the political-media establishment, is the disorder that reigns at the White House. In the course of the publicity debut of *The Agenda* on *60 Minutes*, Mike Wallace said incredulously to Woodward, "*Chaos?*" And Woodward replied unsmilingly, "Chaos. Absolute chaos." It was not that Wallace or his audience had not heard something like that before. Clinton's White House had already been advertised by Al Hunt in *The Wall Street Journal* as a "managerial nightmare." But *chaos* is a far more terrible word, with metaphysical and evolutionary repercussions: It is reality before it has been ordered by consciousness. And that is what Woodward intended to convey. Embodied in a political narrative, *The Agenda* is a primordial drama in which crippled consciousness cannot create order.

One can fix "a managerial nightmare." One cannot fix crippled consciousness. One cannot fix Bill Clinton.

It appears to calm the nerves of the editors of *The Washington Post* to analyze the Clinton White House as though the *Post* were a management consultant and the White House a client. Its editorials set forth simple organizational errors and recommend sound changes—all in a disturbed, even irritated, voice. Clinton, they say, "seemed to countenance—and, thus, authorize—the unstructured, fragmented, weak-accountability, free-form professional lifestyle that has marked his White House."

But editorials are too short to convey the magnitude of the problem. So on March 28, 1994, *Post* Editorial Page Editor Meg Greenfield used her column in *Newsweek* to describe it in detail. And the details are deadly. One can only list some of the subjects Greenfield discusses—all of them manifestations of grotesque irresponsibility.

After making her devotions before the altar of "balance," Greenfield considers:

- "The tendency in the Clinton White House to finesse accountability for much of what goes on."
- The "almost blithe disregard of the importance of establishing lines of responsibility for actions in government."
- The role of Mrs. Clinton, "who wields enormous derivative power without any visible institutional check on it."
- The existence of "endless White House aides, the swarmers, who are more or less into everything but held to account for nothing."
- The meetings with "large hodge-podges of wanderers in, of kibitzers from down the hall."
- The "awful lot of important people who are known as 'in and outers'—friends, consultants and so forth...who come and go and who have a considerable influence over decisions the government then makes—but who in no way have to deal with the ill effects (or ill repute) when what they counsel goes wrong."

The White House is presumed to be the brain and central nervous system of the presidency. As portrayed by Greenfield in *Newsweek*, the Clinton White House is the brain and central nervous system of an idiot.

Greenfield reaches the conclusion that only Clinton "can fix this, because it couldn't occur if he didn't let it happen." In saying that, Greenfield is looking reality in the face. Then, a few

sentences later, she flinches and looks away. She advises Clinton "to intervene," as if, somehow, he were separate and separable from the chaos.

But Clinton is not separable from the chaos. It is *his* chaos. Left to his own devices, Clinton always generates chaos around him.

That is what young Hillary Rodham discovered when she joined young Clinton in Arkansas as he was campaigning in his very first election in 1974. All biographers tell the same story in greater or lesser detail. Norman King, in *Hillary: Her True Story*, writes: "Hillary was stunned at the absolutely anarchic lack of discipline at Clinton's headquarters. Instinctively, she stepped in and began turning things rightside up. Soon enough she was barking out commands. The words 'Hillary said' became a cry that everyone heeded."

This has been Hillary's function from that day to this. It is her consciousness that has always imposed order on Clinton's chaos.

There are actually two islands of order suspended in the primordial Clinton mess: the self-contained universes of Vice President Gore and of the first lady. In a foray into comparative epistemology, Eleanor Clift writes in *Newsweek* (September 13, 1993) that where Clinton runs a meeting "throwing out ideas and endlessly circling the subject," Gore is linear. *Linear*, of course, is the post–Marshall McLuhan word for purposeful, logical thinking. Gore is intellectually organized, says Clift; he is "focused," and so is his operation.

The other island of order is Mrs. Clinton's. She has a bigger staff than does the vice president, and it is the very model of efficient organization. In *Time* (March 21, 1994), Nancy Gibbs transmits a description of Hillary's work universe from Ann Wexler, a career Democrat who was a "senior officer" in the Carter White House. Said Wexler: "[Hillary's] operation is the most organized, the most focused, the most coordinated, and the most disciplined in the White House."

Gibbs says two other significant things:

• Mrs. Clinton moves throughout the various activities of the Clinton White House at will: "Hillary functions in the White House rather like the queen on a chess board. Her power comes from her unrestricted movements."

• And conversely, Clinton and his staff always consult Hillary. Staffers "chart her moves and interests with as much care as his. Few were hired without an audience with her; when the President has a question about almost any sensitive issue that arises the refrain is the same: 'Run this past Hillary.'"

The Sun King was expelled from the Arkansas governorship after one term. The rejection was a frightful blow to Clinton, and his reactions are painful to read. Kathy McClanahan, a childhood friend, tells of Clinton's hysterical weeping when he realized he was losing the election, and how he hid in the bottom of the back seat of her car so that no one could see him. It was an appropriate reaction for a man whose sense of reality is dependent on the perceptions of others.

Time is supplementing Greenfield's analysis. In *Time*, the brain and the central nervous system of the White House is not exactly the brain of an idiot. It is the brain of Hillary Clinton, which she shares with her cognitively crippled, acutely dependent husband. As Woodward put it, she is part of Clinton's brain. As Woodward didn't put it, this does not add up to one single, decently functioning mind.

Now, a brief look at the impact of Clinton's cognitive damage on him. Specifically, we will look at how he responds emotionally to his predicament. The most important and least surprising fact about Clinton's emotional state is that he is in pain. As he circles endlessly around his unresolved policy conflicts, he lives in an epistemological hell. In all the publications and books I have read, I have found only four people who see him as a real human being who is suffering. David Gergen, quoted by Woodward, describes Clinton as being in "psychological anguish." Lloyd Bentsen, cited by Woodward, describes Clinton as revealing intellectual "doubt." At the very end of a long article about Clinton, Joe Klein of *Newsweek*, with no contextual preparation, drops in a single word, "tortured." And when David Shaw of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote about Clinton, he said that decision making for Clinton was an "excruciating" process—which clearly implies pain or suffering. These are insightful and deeply sympathetic reactions to Clinton, but this perspective is rare.

By contrast, Clinton's defenses against pain and suffering are almost universally observed. Because all are tied to, if not solely caused by, his cognitive deficiencies, and because they have had dreadful effects on his presidency, I'll list three of them. You know them already:

• Clinton values work and productivity, but only as a means to status and power. By his own say-so, he has valued nothing more than status and power since he was young. *He is always aware of his relative status in power relationships. And he is extremely sensitive to criticism, especially if it comes from people with high status and power.* His record of "caving" under pressure, of betraying both principles and people, is due most fundamentally to his lack of confidence in his own mind. In the face of an array of power, he capitulates. He has betrayed every significant group in the Democratic party and numerous friends to win

favor with their enemies. The loyalty he commands from his *natural political allies* is paper thin.

• Clinton's mind is out of control. *He has an unusually strong need to be in control of factors outside of him. When he is unable to control others, he grows angry, although the anger is usually not expressed directly.* His entire relationship with the national press has been a covert battle for control, and it has been far more intense than you may know. See Tom Rosenstiel's *Strange Bedfellows* for a shocking report on the spying by the Clinton campaign on the national press during the presidential campaign.

• Clinton's perfectionist demands, which delay and inhibit his decision making, are due in great part, as Lloyd Bentsen says so diplomatically, to his intellectual "doubt." *Clinton is inordinately afraid of making mistakes.* He is in so far over his head, over his capacity to do the work required for the presidency, that he exists in a state of terror. It apparently builds up in the night, and, according to Woodward, the next morning he vomits out the accumulated terror all over George Stephanopoulos in the form of uncontrolled explosions of rage. Clinton's eyes bulge, his face grows scarlet, he yells, he screams, he shrieks. While Clinton is quite capable of controlling this rage and conceals it from the public—it has only been glimpsed by accident and briefly—he does not control it in private. According to Meg Greenfield, he takes his rage out on vulnerable members of his family and on employees—on those over whom he has power.

Stand back and look at all these defenses against pain and fear: Clinton is traitorous. Clinton is a devious manipulator. Clinton grovels before the powerful. Clinton bullies the weak.

These are the attributes of Clinton that are known in both his public and his private life to those he has conned and betrayed. They co-exist with what Joe Klein calls "his relentless huggy, weepy emotionalism"—and *relentless* is a significant word. *Huggy* and *weepy* in this pale-eyed man with the eternally crooked smile are also manipulative weapons.

These do not begin to exhaust Clinton's defensive repertoire. But they are enough to explain waning political support. All of the epistemological problems and all of the emotional defenses listed under "I Can't Move" and "Chaos" are too well known for Clinton to win sustained respect.

There is only one Clinton defense mentioned so far that does not fit this pattern. It is the mysterious one—the strange robotic repetition of "I do too much, too fast," that broken record that Clinton plays in all ears, especially when public approval drops and when important people criticize him.

Do we have a better idea now of what this half-boast, half-lament might mean? We are certainly in a better position to speculate. Clinton, to repeat, *prizes work and productivity, almost to the exclusion of pleasure and interpersonal relationships.* He knows they are the crucial means to his end: status and power. But the subject of productivity fills him with dread, because he is cognitively paralyzed. When he recites monotonously that he tries "to do too much, too fast," or that he sometimes "works hard but not smart," he is actually saying, "I am very intelligent. I work terribly hard. I am not slow, I am fast. I think and I work with great speed." It seems painfully clear that with those words Clinton is denying his cognitive paralysis and is asserting his self-worth.

And he has been doing this over and over and over again for more than 15 years.

But in one way, the "I do too much, too fast" phenomenon still remains mysterious, because that mechanically recited formula is both a boast and a lament. It is as if Clinton, in robotically asserting pride, is also robotically confessing shame. It reminds one of that strange pledge he made before entering the governor's office in Arkansas, that he would "try not to do everything at once." He seems to be saying that he is under some kind of compulsion to do something irrational—something involving intellectual scattershot, something involving speed.

It is not surprising that of all the questions asked at the beginning of this article, and all the questions answered, that this one endlessly reiterated formula of pride, of shame—of helpless, disintegrating racing—remains the code that is hardest to break.

Obsessive Compulsive

In a *New York Times Magazine* article (March 8, 1992), Peter Applebome reports the following information: As a result of Roger Clinton's jail sentence for drug trafficking, the Clinton family went through counseling sessions in which Bill Clinton participated. Clinton told Applebome that his principal discovery about human relationships was this: "I finally realized how my compulsive and obsessive ambition got in the way."

There is no reason to doubt that Clinton was diagnosed as being "compulsive and obsessive," since that is what journalists have been documenting since Clinton entered the White House.

All of Clinton's thinking problems and emotional defenses described in this article are symptoms of Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder as identified by the American Psychiatric Association. (See *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 3rd edition revised, pages 354–356.) In fact, I have used their words to introduce each psychological trait and I have italicized them to call them to your attention. You will recognize them from my text.

The diagnostic literature says that at least five of the criteria of Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder must be present to identify someone as suffering from this disorder. Here are five that describe Clinton:

1. Perfectionism that interferes with task completion, e.g. inability to complete a project because [the person's] own overly strict standards are not met.

2. Preoccupation with details...to the extent that the major point of the activity is lost.

3. Unreasonable reluctance to allow others to do things because of a conviction that they will not do them correctly.

4. Excessive devotion to work and productivity to the exclusion of leisure activities and friendships.

5. Indecisiveness: decision making is either avoided, postponed, or protracted, e.g. the person cannot get assignments done on time because of ruminating about priorities.

Here are additional characteristics found in people with this disorder, which also describe Clinton. They are taken from a long, repetitive, and badly written piece of narrative prose. Again,

you will recognize them from my text:

1. No matter how good an accomplishment is, the person does not feel it "good enough."

2. The person allocates time poorly; the most important tasks are left to the last moment.

3. The person usually keeps postponing the pleasurable activity, such as a vacation, so that it may never occur.

4. The person may avoid or postpone decision making because of an inordinate fear of making a mistake.

5. The person may experience considerable distress because of the indecisiveness.

6. The person has an unusually strong need to be in control. When unable to control others, he often ruminates and becomes angry.

7. The person is often extremely sensitive to social criticism, especially if it comes from someone with considerable status or authority.

I have omitted several symptoms about which I have read nothing or which clearly do not describe Clinton, but the vast majority do describe him. That is why the clinical language readily served to introduce journalistic observations.

These psychological classifications are not fixed. Their boundaries are not absolutes. But they are not tone poems or impressionist paintings either. What journalists have been observing about Clinton for two years, what Clinton calls "my compulsive and obsessive ambition," conforms strikingly to the clinical descriptions above.

Personality disorders range from the mildest of cases to the acutely severe. And there are also psychotic forms of these disorders. Clinton clearly is not psychotic—he is not "crazy." But his problem is nonetheless severe.

Its severity is captured by its duration, by his dependence on his wife and on Stephanopoulos, and by the fact that he has found it impossible to conceal the problem from the press. And it is captured most shockingly by the word Stephanopoulos uttered to Panetta: *never*. To say that Clinton "never" makes a political or policy decision may be exaggerated. But even if exaggerated, it communicates the intensity of the problem. Only acute distress over Clinton's cognitive paralysis could inspire Stephanopoulos to use the word *never*.

It is important to remember that Clinton's indecisiveness—his paralysis—is not consciously acknowledged. He is literally unaware of it. It is surrounded by a Chinese wall of rationalization, reinterpretation, and evasion. He does not even have language to describe it. He only knows that he tries "to do too much, too fast." "I can't move" is the expression I have given him.

The president's fractured cognitive state is so widely known that it is being publicized in *Time* and chattered about in cyberspace. The officials who are whispering about Clinton's inability to concentrate don't just have a secret, they have a public relations emergency. Clinton's fractured attention span, his acute distractibility, his incessant talking, are further manifestations of his compulsive disorder. They provide further evidence that we have a mentally impaired president in the White House.

And he surely does not know that beneath this Chinese wall, yet another psychological conflict lies buried. It, too, first presents itself in an incoherent confidence to an interviewer and it too must be decoded. But this time, you will see, the voyage into Clinton's conflicts comes to an end, leaving only the consequences to contemplate.

THE SECOND CONFLICT

"It's a very difficult thing to be raised with a myth. All of my relatives tried to make it a positive rather than a negative thing. But I think I always felt, in some sense, that I should be in a hurry in life, because it gave me a real sense of mortality.

"I mean, most kids never think about when they're going to have to run out of time, when they might die. I thought about it all the time because my father died at 29 before I was born. By the same token, I feel as if I've had a very full life. I mean, whatever happens to me, I've already outlived him by years. And I think it's one reason I was always in such a hurry to do things—which is both good and bad....

"But any way, I think when I was younger that's one of the reasons I was always in a hurry. And I also think I thought I had to live for myself and for him, too. I sort of had to meet a very high standard of conduct and accomplishment, in part because of his absence."

— Bill Clinton discussing the death of his father before he was born, in an interview with Charles Allen, March 15, 1991

We clearly see here the roots of one theme in Bill Clinton's psychology that we have already encountered in a different form: "hurry," the rapid, racing, staccato theme of "I do too much, too fast." But there is a second theme here: "death." When a child ruminates about his own death "all the time," the first thing one thinks of is depression. And depression, which immobilizes people, seems to evoke the second familiar theme—"I can't move."

As Bill Clinton experienced them in childhood, the themes of inertia, his "I can't move," and of action, his "too much, too fast," were originally "I'm going to die when I'm young" and "I must hurry to do things." I foreshorten them here to "death" and "hurry."

"Death"

Clinton has not identified depression in himself as far as I know. That has not kept people from continuously talking about it and writing about it. What *kind* of depression we do not know—there are many kinds—but Clinton seems to have had sleeping and eating disorders since he was young, with intermittent periods of crashing self-esteem. These symptoms show up in all types of depression.

Childhood

In addition to thinking about death "all the time," Clinton ate too much as a child: Soon after he was elected, this psychology-conscious president staged an encounter session with formal "facilitators" at Camp David to encourage his new cabinet members to "bond" with each other. The session leaked, and *Newsweek* on February 15, 1993, published the following item: "[Clinton] talked about how he was a fat kid when he was 5 or 6 and how the other kids taunted him."

Georgetown

In college, classmates noticed that Clinton didn't sleep much. His roommate Tom Campbell repeats what Clinton told him: "During freshman year, he developed that habit, he says, of sleeping only four hours a night, and then taking a couple of 20 minute naps during the day." Campbell says Clinton also told him that he had a deliberate policy of not sleeping, because "Napoleon and all the great leaders" got by on very little sleep.

Clinton was glamorizing his insomnia.

Oxford

In his early 20s, Clinton entered into correspondence with his draft board, writing the letter which has been so highly publicized. A section in Clinton's letter to Col. Eugene Holmes dated December 3, 1969, says: "At that time, after we made our agreement and you had sent my 1-D deferment to my draft board, the anguish and loss of my self-regard and self-confidence really set in. I hardly slept for weeks and kept going by eating compulsively and reading until exhaustion brought sleep." In this letter, Clinton does not compare himself to Napoleon and other great leaders but reports, in adult language, on a crashed self-esteem, severe insomnia, and "eating compulsively."

Arkansas 1980

By this time, the Sun King had made his appearance, the man who was ravenously hungry for adulation. It was the Sun King who was expelled from the Arkansas governorship after one term. The massive rejection was a frightful blow to Clinton, and his reactions as he grasped what was happening to him are painful to read.

Kathy McClanahan, a childhood friend of Clinton, told David Gallen about Clinton's hysterical weeping when he realized he was losing the election, and how he hid in the bottom of the back seat of her car so that no one could see him. It was an extraordinarily appropriate reaction for a man whose sense of reality is dependent on the perceptions of others.

Some biographers after interviewing his political friends report that he rebounded briskly from the shock of defeat. Some biographers tell a different story—that following his defeat, Clinton withdrew into partial seclusion and suffered for a few months from depression. Some say it was severe and even dangerous; some say it was mild. There is no earthly way to know.

What one can know, because Clinton has described it, is the depth of his despair during that period of defeat. In a May 1992 article in *Vanity Fair*, Gail Sheehy reported that "Bill remembers during this dark period being...haunted by a sense of imminent death."

That "sense of imminent death" could not be seen from the outside, but what could be seen is appalling to read about. It was the hysteria of the Sun King trying frantically to understand the loss of the highest value of his life, and his struggle to find a way to get it back. Clinton abased himself before the Arkansas electorate: He pleaded, he begged, he apologized, he groveled. He tried to clasp the hands of everyone in the state of Arkansas to ask forgiveness. It is quite clear that Clinton's self-esteem had crashed.

Of all the published interpretations of this period in Clinton's life, by far the most interesting and important comes from Charles Allen, an Arkansas educator whose Ph.D. thesis became *The Comeback Kid*, and Jonathan Portis, with whom Allen wrote the book. Portis is a former editor at the *Arkansas Gazette* and the *Commercial Appeal* in Memphis and has observed Clinton in action since the 1970s: "Clinton is a captive to his fear of losing....[His loss in] 1980, when he was tossed out of the governor's chair for two years, crushed Clinton's self-esteem and sent him into an emotional tailspin. He became withdrawn, muttering to his friends that Arkansas didn't deserve a man of his ability. He now professes to believe that he learns more from tough times than from easy experiences. *What he learned in 1980 is that a political loss, especially one that threatens his career, hits him deep in the psyche. Losing made him terrified of losing.*" (Emphasis added.) It was for this reason, say Allen and Portis, that Clinton will do anything and say anything to win—that is to say, he will do anything and say anything not to lose.

The Presidential Campaign

Here, representatives of the national press got their first close look at Clinton. In between the political coverage and the coverage of Clinton's most striking lies—about the draft and about adultery—reporters learned about some of Clinton's symptoms: the nonstop eating, the nights with only a few hours of sleep, the explosions of rage. Some of this, particularly the eating, which was visible, trickled into the news coverage. Most of it did not.

ABC correspondent Chris Bury, interviewed by David Gallen when the campaign was over, knew he was looking at psychological difficulties: "Everybody in the press bus thought that [Clinton] performed poorest in the morning and that he was kind of sluggish. I don't know if depressed is the right word, but he was often off and he didn't really get going until late in the day when he gave his best performances.

"He's an extraordinary performer and if he was able to mask depression and anger and other emotions which might leave others with a negative perception, I think he did a good job of it."

Bury, who found Clinton to be a "masterful politician," was most afflicted by Clinton's dishonesty: "I think...he's got a terrible problem with the truth...." As Tom Rosenstiel shows in *Strange Bedfellows*, many, perhaps most, journalists who covered the Clinton campaign knew that Clinton had told serious

lies. But the most astute among them also came away from the campaign with the uneasy sense that Bill Clinton seemed to be suffering from and "masking" some kind of depression.

The Presidency

After his first six chaotic months in office, during which Clinton lurched from one self-made crisis to another and the public opinion polls dropped like stones, a rumor sped from the White House to the press. Frightened aides were whispering to reporters: "He's lost his confidence."

Margaret Carlson in *Time* reported, "His downward spiral in popularity and his shift in positions are creating a sense of public vertigo. More than ever, Americans regard their new president with two nagging questions: Is he up to the job? And, What does he stand for?...One long-time friend who spoke with the president by telephone last week reported that he never sounded 'so sad in his life.'"

And then, after the president named Gergen as his adviser, the story changed. Dan Balz and Ann Devroy of *The Washington Post* wrote, "The impact on Clinton [of Gergen's appointment] has been noticeable to his advisers: 'He had become so uncertain that all the political surefootedness that he used to be known for was gone,' says one. 'That is starting to turn around.'"

This is the same period when the New Clinton had suddenly become decisive and had suddenly stopped doing "too much, too fast." Now he had suddenly become self-confident. The reporters had no idea just how fragile was the president's self-esteem.

But the Gergen solution didn't last. By August 1994, Clinton's administration was again in a chaotic state, again facing a hostile Congress, again in danger of losing on its major initiatives. The polls again crashed, this time to their lowest level to date. And reports of black emotions again began to leak from the White House. Again, Clinton confronted the possibility of political death, and again it hit him "deep in the psyche."

Jack Nelson and John M. Broder of the *Los Angeles Times* (August 26, 1994) said the president and first lady were describing the political hostility they encountered as a "surreal nightmare." Depicting "an intensely frustrated Clinton," Ann Devroy and Dan Balz reported (*Washington Post,* August 14, 1994): "Associates describe Clinton as having struggled through a period of intense anger and bitterness, combined with a belief that no other president had been as mistreated by the news media and by partisan opponents."

One "associate" said Clinton has compared the situation to his loss in Arkansas—the loss that left him, in Gail Sheehy's paraphrase of his words, "haunted by a sense of imminent death."

We cannot know his present state. All we know is that a panic-stricken Clinton, who will do anything not to lose, has for the first time agreed to delegate authority. He has ceded unprecedented power to his new chief of staff, Leon Panetta.

Clinton has also communicated his despair with an analogy. Nelson and Broder report that he has been "comparing himself to Ahab, locked in a death embrace with Moby Dick in the form of an unruly Congress. The beast keeps dragging him under...and he can barely catch his breath before another dive carries him down again."

"Hurry"

When a well-known person tells a preposterous lie about himself—the kind of lie that everyone who knows him or who has worked with him or for him or has read about him knows to be untrue—there is always a strong possibility that he does not know he is lying and that he is denying something about himself that he cannot endure to allow into consciousness. There is something about Clinton's "hurry"—his "hurry to do things" because he might die young—that caused him to tell such a lie.

In the same long interview with Charles Allen on March 15, 1991, in which Clinton communicated his incoherent and childish "hurry" problem, he also gave an adult name to that problem. He described himself as "compulsively overactive."

He told Allen proudly that he was the kind of person "who just likes to organize every minute of the day," immediately observing that he is "compulsively overactive."

Clinton's portrayal of himself as superlatively organized was a staggering untruth. Clinton has always been supremely disorganized. He has always functioned in chaos. He has never adhered to a schedule. And his chronic lateness is measured by intervals of half hours and hours, not minutes.

In making that statement to Allen, Clinton was violently denying some of his most obvious and politically damaging characteristics.

The strange statement is also reminiscent of something we have seen before. Like "I try to do too much, too fast," it is a boast combined with a lament. Clinton was proud of his "compulsive overactivity" but by redefining his compulsion as organization, he was revealing shame.

For Clinton, the entire phenomenon of "hurry" contains some component over which he is in deep conflict.

Before we can begin to fathom the meaning of that conflict, however, we must understand the nature of Clinton's "compulsive overactivity." The symptoms are so obvious, and so disturbing, that they have generated whispering within the administration and, startlingly, a diagnosis among psychology-conscious members of the public.

Based on the few scattered memories of the young Clinton in print, it seems he has been compulsively overactive, has been hurrying, all his life: He and his mother report that, as a child, he got a D in conduct for talking too much and not giving the other children a chance to answer the teacher's questions; he says, "I could never keep my mouth shut"; a high-school friend recalls that "it was hard for him to relax really, and just take it easy"; while at Oxford, he wrote to a friend that aside from the "unavoidable" library work, he was "continuously on the move"; he later recalled that he spent his first two weeks at Oxford walking 14 hours a day.

More detailed observations start with Clinton's entry into public life, when reporters began to observe him. One of the first things they discovered was his extreme distractibility.

Arkansas news reporter Anne Jackson, speaking to David Gallen, has many memories of Clinton as governor. Talking about Clinton's chronic lateness, she says, "Clinton is one of those people who is distracted by people, and by stories, and by things. I mean, he's like a kid in a candy store about the environ-

ment around him. He'll see something, and if it gets his attention, he's gone. There's no clock in his head."

A particularly striking description of Clinton's distractibility, but one in which Clinton—now a presidential candidate—is avidly *pursuing* such distractions, comes from former UPI correspondent Steve Buel. Buel describes what he saw at 11:30 p.m., after a "grueling day" of campaigning: "I went to the gift shop looking for a copy of the Sunday *New York Times*...and suddenly,...I felt almost like there were too many electrons or something. Clinton had come in. He's looking at the shelves and browsing....[H]e's been at it nonstop for 18 hours and my butt's kicked, but he's wired, walking the edges of this gift shop, picking up magazines and flipping through them and picking up Sidney Sheldon–type novels and picking up North Carolina tourist curios and it's like he's eating the wall of the place. He's just picking the stuff up...and it doesn't satisfy his need for stimulus....He's the ultimate stimulus junkie; at 11:30 at night...he needs more. He's almost like one of those Japanese monster-movie characters that the more people it eats, the bigger it gets....I buy my newspaper and flee."

The same kind of information emerged from the White House once Clinton was president. He boasted to a C-SPAN reporter who interviewed him in the Oval Office that "sometimes I read four or five books at once," adding "I never finish them but I get the gist of them."

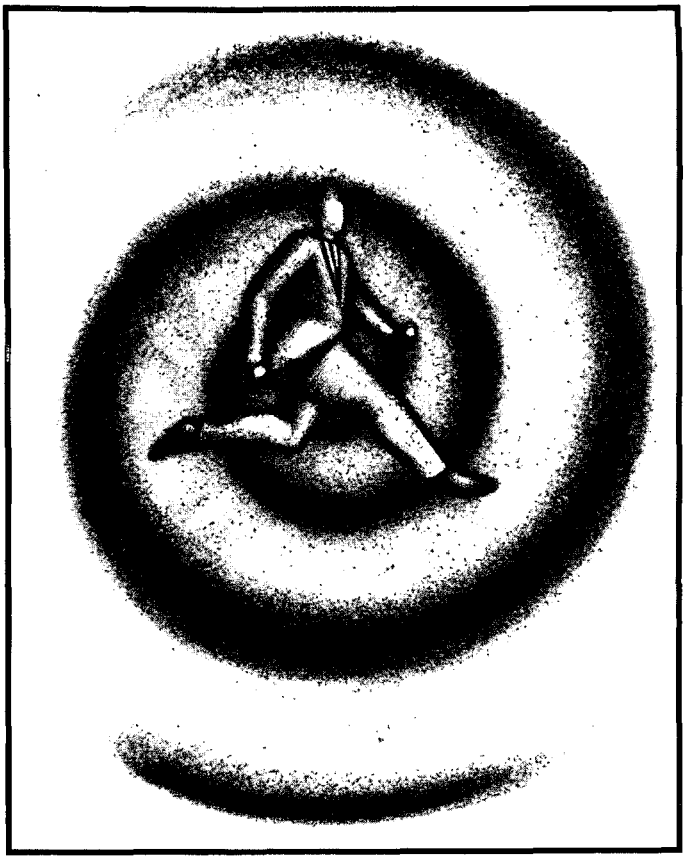
And *Newsweek* reporters Eleanor Clift and Bob Cohn, with Jonathan Alter and Joe Klein, spent a week at the White House "to chronicle seven days in the life of a president" and reported in the July 12, 1993 issue: "During the campaign, his advisers observed that Clinton seemed most in his element when he was watching two TVs, conducting three conversations, playing cards, and eating—all at once. The challenge for his aides—and particularly for his wife, Hillary—has always been to slow him down and make him focus on one thing at a time."

It appears that even when Clinton relaxes he tries to do everything at once.

His most striking activity, however, is talking. As Leon Wieseltier observes, Clinton has "a horror of silence."

His capacity for talk is legendary. During the presidential campaign, Clinton customarily talked for 12 to 16 hours a day, leaving his entourage of reporters, photographers, chauffeurs, and pilots dropping in their tracks. As governor of Arkansas, Oakley reports, he was given to regaling the press with half-hour-long "stream of consciousness monologues" until his own press officer dragged him away. Woodward also reports on Clinton's "monologues" and describes him as "rambling on inconclusively," or as holding "endless, rambling policy seminars." David Broder says that Clinton has a "penchant for talking issues to death." Jonathan Alter in *Newsweek* reports that Clinton "thinks out loud in endless meetings" and that he can "talk for seven hours and not notice the time."

Clinton not only talks all day, but even when he is alone, he talks into the wee hours of the night. He telephones people late at night, when they are asleep or going to sleep, with no awareness of their possible discomfort.



TROY THOMAS

Occasionally, a reporter grasps that something strange, something irrational, is going on. Meredith Oakley writes, "[Clinton] becomes very restless when left alone and seeks out conversation, however mundane or inconsequential." And later, "He is almost compulsive in seeking people; many of those midnight telephone calls for which he is famous have no bearing on politics or business of any kind. Sometimes he has no more in his mind than contact with another human being...."

Clinton's continual talking has caused him immense political trouble, both at home and abroad. And journalists, among others, have criticized him sharply for the results. Thus, Murray Kempton wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* when Clinton had abandoned his pledges to the Bosnian Muslims: "William J. Clinton is an undisciplined and inveterate babbler. That habit, while tiresome, is comparatively harmless in the ordinary realms of life, but grievously damaging to any president who cannot shake it off. The loosest-lipped of us might be wary of babbling if we remembered that words have consequences inescapable for an American president, for Clinton occupies an office from which no babble can emanate without carrying the risk of being mistaken for a statement of fixed intention."

And, on the domestic front, the awareness of Clinton's "babbling" is repeatedly identified as a threat to his dignity and authority. Thus, Ann Devroy writes in *The Washington Post* (May 22, 1994), "For Clinton, there is virtually nothing he won't comment on, and a normal day for him brings a gush of speeches, statements, remarks, and photo session interviews. Even some of his own aides lament, as one did recently, that he has 'cheapened the currency' of the presidency this way."

Such observers are making valid points. But after chastising Clinton and, effectively, telling him to shut up, they do not ask why he babbles, and why, even when the entire national press corps seems dedicated to the goal of telling him to shut up, he keeps on talking.

Every once in a while, however, a journalist reveals an awareness of a deeper problem. Matthew Cooper, reporting on the summit in Tokyo for *U.S. News & World Report*, July 19, 1993, writes: "[N]ot every moment in Tokyo was enjoyable for Bill Clinton. On a personal level, he had to endure his own version of hell: sitting silently.

"At the first meeting of the heads of state, he was surprised to find out that all the leaders...were to speak one at a time. Clinton sat listening to interminable speeches, especially from French president François Mitterand, before he got to chime in.

"'He found it extremely confining,' says an aide."

The teacher who gave the young Clinton a D in conduct because he would not take turns and give the other children a chance would not have been surprised. Nor would the legions of people he has torn out of deep sleep to talk to him. Sitting silently has always been Bill Clinton's "version of hell."

Clinton's presidency has degenerated into chronic crisis and, to all intents and purposes, it is now in receivership while three California Democrats try to rescue it in time for the 1996 election. Clinton alone cannot rescue it. He was not psychologically qualified for the presidency, and he is not now able to save it from the corrosive effects of his own psychology. The new team will not solve Clinton's problems with managerial reorganization and Reaganesque appearances in the Rose Garden.

But it is only in silence that one can concentrate and that one can think. And, repeatedly, those who are politically closest to Bill Clinton—those who feel able to advise him—have implored him to take time off from the incessant talking so that he can find the time to think. Whenever Clinton agrees, it is considered news, though the adviser usually does not speak to the press directly about it. But at least once, a major political figure, Vice President Al Gore, has told the press what he advised Clinton to do.

Kenneth T. Walsh reported in *U.S. News & World Report* on July 19, 1993: "White House advisers say Gore brings to the White House several important traits that the president lacks, including self-discipline...and in a strange twist, Clinton has begun emulating Gore....As Clinton's approval ratings dropped in recent weeks, the vice president gave his friend some blunt advice: Pace yourself, get your schedule under control and set aside more private time to collect your thoughts. Clinton finally agreed. 'Everybody around the president has advised him to take more time off,' Gore told *U.S. News*."

Clinton did not then, or at any other time, keep his promise to set aside more private time "to collect his thoughts." He can't "collect" them, and it is a promise he can't keep. It is not a matter of "self-discipline." It is a matter of being unable to shut his mouth—save under very special circumstances, when he sees a clear-cut advantage in listening or being silent.

Recently, as the polls have dived to their lowest point since the election, all these criticisms and recommendations have again welled up in print. They are being published as I write these words. And almost always, certain things are assumed: that Clinton can voluntarily change his ways, that Clinton can "collect his thoughts," that Clinton can use quiet private time to think.

But there is evidence now that some people have finally grasped that those assumptions about Clinton are false, that Clinton's problem is located in the realm of *attention*.

On August 20, 1994, the most overt expression of concern appeared in an article by R. W. Apple Jr. of *The New York Times*: "The question now, therefore, is how long the President, whose attention can wander like a teen-ager's on Saturday night, manages to keep himself squarely on target."

The condescension is undisguised. The teenager on a Saturday night is intended to be amusing. But one thing is deadly serious. Apple is identifying a "wandering" attention span.

Two other references to the same phenomenon are entirely covert. One can be found in a passage in Woodward's book. Another appears in a comment by a "senior diplomat" speaking anonymously to John M. Goshko of *The Washington Post*—both in the summer of 1994.

Woodward's passage will give you little new information about Clinton, save for one word, which I have italicized: "At night the president attended a social event or a working or family dinner. Then he would *flit* among the kitchen, his bedroom, the living room, the family room, and the office in the residence. Little piles of paper that he was reading would accumulate. He would watch some TV, call people, or get into long, late-night conversations with a visitor...known or unknown to Stephanopoulos."

Flit?

And the anonymous senior diplomat says something equally significant, and again I have italicized it: "[Secretary of State Warren] Christopher has tried to keep a steady course but he has been hampered by Clinton's tendency to *flitter* between issues like a butterfly."

Flitter?

People who use verbs like *flit* and *flitter* have large vocabularies and know exactly what they are trying to convey: They are saying that Clinton cannot concentrate.

An inability to concentrate is a disturbing attribute in a president, and one can understand people using code language to communicate with each other about it. They are wasting their time, however. The latest embarrassment to hit Clinton is a mass diagnosis of him as suffering from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. That is the childhood disorder, which can continue in adulthood, that is characterized by a scattered mind, an inability to concentrate, and acute distractibility. According to *Time* (July 18, 1994), people with the disorder have decided that Clinton is one of their number. And *Wired* (June 1994) has carried an article by Evan I. Schwartz saying that some 7,000 sufferers from the disorder are logging onto the Attention Deficit Disorder Forum on CompuServe, where they acquire knowledge about the disorder, offer each other support and encouragement—and discuss famous people who they think share their symptoms. One of these famous people, says Schwartz, is Clinton.

The bizarre truth is that the president has become the poster boy of the Attention Deficit world. And Schwartz explains why. He describes the most important characteristics of a person with ADD as "a short attention span" and "a multitasking mind"—a mind that seeks to perform many tasks simultaneously.

He then elaborates: "Those afflicted are constantly scanning their environment seeking for all things captivating. They may read lots of books, but they finish few....They're news junkies and channel-clickers/cable-surfers. In conversation, they often detour into parenthetical tangents, never returning to the main point....They juggle too many projects and are chronically late. But when something grabs their full attention, they can launch into hyperfocus marathons that last well into the night. It's not so much that they lack the ability to pay attention. It's more that they cannot control what they pay attention to and how long their attention lasts."

It is easy to understand why Attention Deficit sufferers want to claim Clinton as their own, but they are probably deluding themselves. Clinton's record of academic achievement—and his last-minute cramming, which requires a capacity to muster attention when it is absolutely essential—is such that it is inconceivable that he has ever had this disorder.

But it is nonetheless significant that the president's fractured cognitive state is so widely known that it is being publicized in a major newsmagazine and chattered about in cyberspace, and that it will inevitably run its course through the media. The White House aides, State Department officials, and others who are now whispering about Clinton's inability to concentrate would do better to realize that they don't just have a secret on their hands, they have something resembling a public relations emergency.

Clinton's fractured attention span, his acute distractibility, his incessant talking, are further manifestations of his compulsive disorder. He is undoubtedly accurate when he describes himself as "compulsively overactive." This diagnosis is yet another way of looking at his cognitive damage. It provides further evidence that we have a mentally impaired president in the White House.

There is one last symptom for us to consider, the one we set aside—the extraordinary untruth Clinton told Charles Allen in 1991 when he redefined his "compulsive overactivity," his "hurry," to mean amazing organization and tight control over every minute of his life. It is only now that we can see the full magnitude of that untruth. But it would be an enormous error to think that Clinton was consciously lying when he described himself as superbly organized. One need only remember more than 15 years of profoundly unconscious and robotic invocations of "I do too much, too fast" to know that Clinton has no understanding of his "hurry."

Clinton's assertion that he is superbly organized is an almost ferocious denial of his cognitive impairment.

We have now seen two variations of the same clashing themes in Clinton. There is the dark, dirgelike theme of paralysis and fear. And there is the racing, rushing, striving theme which seeks ceaselessly to escape from and to override the dirgelike theme.

The first is the theme of "death" and inertia: "I can't move..." "I will die..." The second is the theme of life and action, of doing: "I must hurry and do things...", "I try to do too much, too fast...", "I will try *not* to do everything at once...".

Those two warring themes seem central to Clinton's very being. Whatever else is wrong with him, and whatever may be right with him, he is riven by this particular conflict. Clinton is deeply proud of and deeply afraid of his own mind. He is in ceaseless flight from its tragically damaged aspects. But no matter how fast he races, no matter how proud he is of racing, he cannot outrace it. It is with him always—assaulting his confidence, corrupting his efforts, and mocking his dreams of glory.

Politics

At the opening of this article I said that a psychological perspective on Bill Clinton should contribute to one's understanding of him, of his presidency, and of the political events of the past two years. I now add that it should contribute to one's thinking about the political future.

After two years, Clinton's presidency has degenerated into chronic crisis and, to all intents and purposes, it is now in receivership while three California Democrats try to rescue that presidency in time for the 1996 election. Clinton alone cannot rescue it. He was not psychologically qualified for the presidency, and he is not now able to save it from the corrosive effects of his own psychology.

This profile does not exhaust the subject of Clinton's psychological problems. He has others I have not discussed, such as grandiosity, and I have scarcely mentioned the first lady, save to say that she is in far better cognitive shape than Clinton. But even this discussion of a few key problems should suffice to tell the reader that the California trio—Leon Panetta, the new chief of staff; Tony Coelho, the new de facto head of the Democratic party; and political consultant Bill Bradley—will not solve Clinton's problems with managerial reorganization and Reaganesque appearances in the Rose Garden.

Coelho has been quoted as saying that all the White House needs is "some old pros who know the town." Clearly, he does not know, any more than Gergen knew, what he is walking into.

"Old pros" cannot heal the fractured cognition of the man in the Oval Office, whose morning ritual includes vomiting out his terror of the burden he cannot carry.

While the Californians have their unrealistic honeymoon with their captive president, others can use the time to reflect more soberly on the political implications of the situation.

Since Democrats, liberals, and leftists have the most thinking to do, I'll review quickly the major implications for Republicans, conservatives, and libertarians. First, it is preposterous to attack Clinton as a leftist or a socialist. A man who collapses in the face of corporate hostility is not a leftist or a socialist. Second, it is preposterous to carry on feverishly over the disposition, past or present, of Clinton's genital organs when the man has a fractured *mind*.

It is demanding, I know, to ask older Republicans to think about something radically new. But the younger ones might start paying close attention to the fact that Democrats have put a cognitively disabled man in the White House. Defenses of the family, moral homilies, and economics lessons do not address the problem.

As for Democrats, liberals, and leftists, they must answer the question suggested by Stephen Hess of the Brookings Institution, who, on learning of the California trio's plans to resurrect Clinton, observed, "Their chances of succeeding are based on the assumption that he is educable." (Quoted by Howard Fineman in *Newsweek*, August 29, 1994.) Hess's formulation implies that he does not think Clinton "educable."

Actually, if it is simply a matter of saying words, of memorizing chunks of information, of delivering speeches, Clinton is entirely educable: He can learn to *say* anything. And in sheer terror of losing, he will say anything anyone wants him to say. But if rescuing Clinton requires any change in his psychology, he is totally ineducable. No one can change his psychology on command.

Thus, Hess and like-minded liberals have other questions to consider: Does Clinton's charisma compensate for his problems? Is there really no other unimpaired and reputable Democrat who could be nominated to run, with a good chance of success, in 1996? *Must* Democrats prop up a cognitive cripple? And, if they must, why must they?

This is just a hint at the kinds of questions it is time for *both* Democrats and Republicans to consider. Above all, political thought for the future requires that both Democrats and Republicans retain the awareness of Clinton's past.

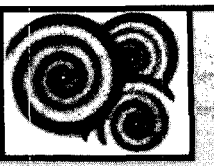
It is not an *accident* that Clinton has ended up in Democratic party receivership. It is not an *accident* that the first attempt to control him personally was directed at his compulsive talking. It is not an *accident* that the first attempt to control the White House was to deal with the chaos that Clinton always generates around him. It is not an *accident* that the public sees him as weak and indecisive. It is not an *accident* that mainstream journalism, to quote Michael Kelly, treats Clinton with "dismissive contempt." And it is not an *accident* that his fractured attention span is so obvious he is now the poster boy for the Attention Deficit world.

None of this is an accident. That is what one can learn about the political past by thinking about Clinton's psychology.

It is now time to think about Clinton's psychology in terms that will shape the political future: What is it about contemporary politics that has put such a damaged man in the White House? Why, rather than repudiating him, has his party rallied to save him by camouflaging the reality of his fundamental incompetence? Why can we be certain that Republicans in the same situation would do the same thing?

And how, in the face of all this, does anyone dare to chastise the public and the press for their cynicism?

Contributing Editor Edith Efron is a journalist and author.



Books used in preparing this article:

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The Comeback Kid, by Charles F. Allen and Jonathan Portis, New York: Birch Lane Press, 286 pages, $18.95

1993

Hillary: Her True Story, by Norman King, New York: Birch Lane Press, 211 pages, $19.95

The Hillary Factor: America's Most Powerful First Lady, by Rex Nelson, New York: Gallen Publishing Group, 364 pages, $5.99 paper

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1994

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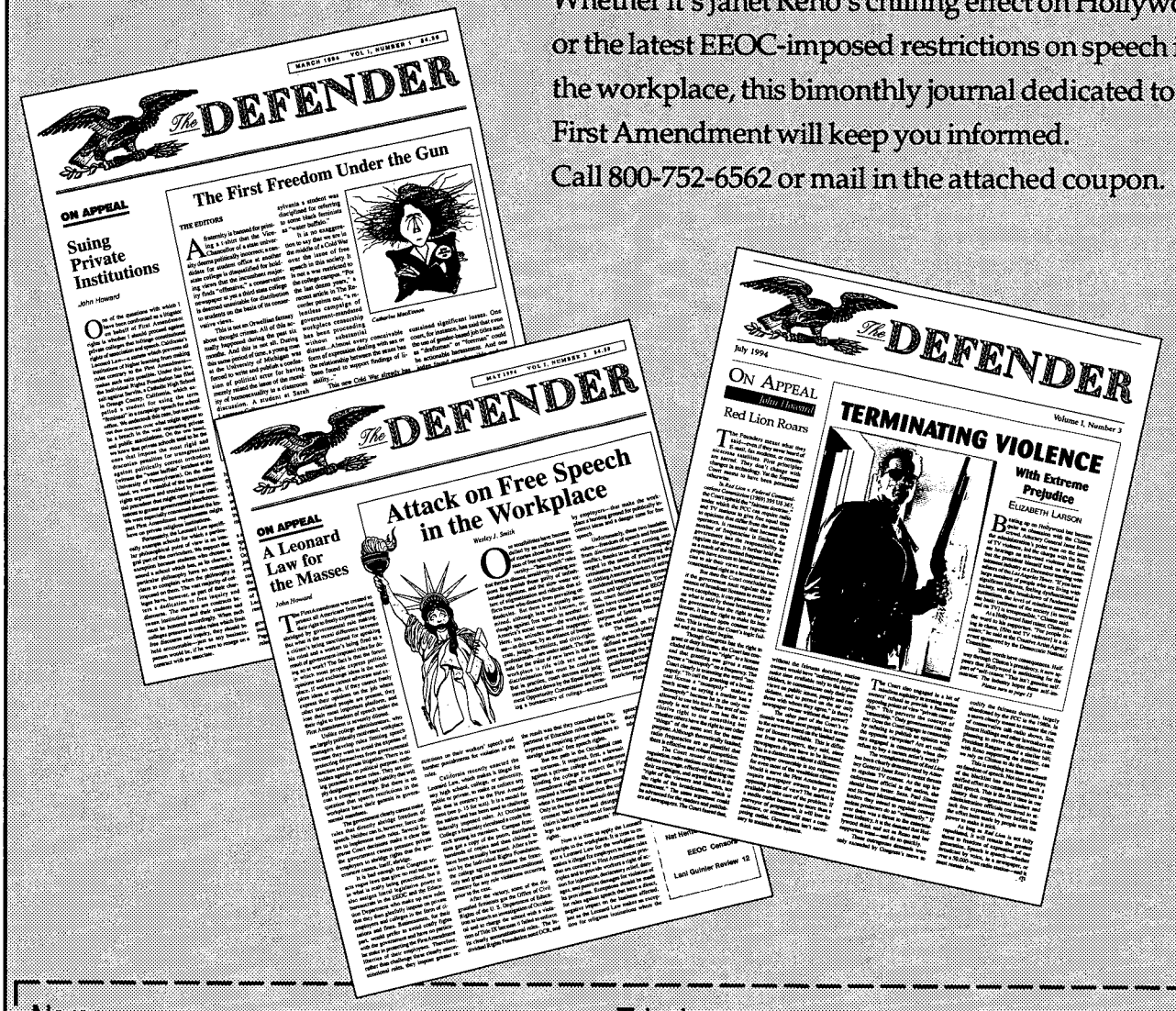

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Sinking Our State

By Ron K. Unz

California's "Save Our State" initiative is masquerading as an attack on welfare.

IF THE ROAD TO HELL IS PAVED WITH good intentions, then the Save Our State immigration initiative on California's November ballot represents a superhighway.

At first glance, the measure, which prevents illegal immigrants from receiving public benefits, might appear quite attractive to opponents of California's overgrown social welfare state. After all, if rolling back the tide of wealth redistribution has to start somewhere, why not with recipients who aren't even legal residents?

Even the staunchest libertarians who believe in open borders don't believe that illegal immigrants should receive financial subsidies from the country they enter. Add to this California's horrendous budget deficit, and support for any measure which purports to save tax money seems assured. Indeed, according to a Field poll, the measure, which will appear as Proposition 187, enjoys 64 percent support.

So much for theory. In practice, Prop. 187 would be an unmitigated disaster for California, with regard both to personal liberty and to state finance.

Consider a few simple facts. Illegal immigrants are *already* ineligible for state welfare assistance or food stamps, and their estimated use of medical services is quite low, just a small fraction of 1 percent of California's $57 billion budget. The only significant government cost associated with illegal immigration is therefore through the public school system, which immigrant children attend. Illegal immigrants make up perhaps 5 percent of California's total population, and most are in the prime working years of 25 to 40; those with children obviously make use of the public schools, and the sums involved

Proposition 187 masks the real issue in California and elsewhere, which is not illegal immigration, but immigration period.

are substantial. So one of the central thrusts of the SOS initiative is to root out these immigrant children (most of whom are actually American-born citizens) from the public schools.

How to do this? By turning public school teachers and administrators into *de facto* INS agents, forcing them to investigate the family background of each and every child in their school, at enormous effort and expense, and to report to the authorities those whom they suspect may have a father or mother who entered the country illegally. Having schools encourage small children to inform on the status of their parents has heavy totalitarian overtones, and the practice was even abandoned by the Soviet Union soon after Stalin's death. In recent years, there have been scattered reports of American school drug-education programs that have persuaded their elementary school enrollees to turn their parents in to the police. Establishing our public schools as agencies of government law enforcement, as SOS would do, is not a happy precedent.

THE INITIATIVE ONLY GETS WORSE. SINCE the authors view immigrant workers with as much alarm as immigrant layabouts, the measure mandates a five-year prison sentence (or $25,000 fine) for any illegal immigrant who uses false identity papers in pursuit of gainful employment. Although estimates vary, perhaps upwards of 1 million of the illegal immigrants employed as California's gardeners, housemaids, hotel workers, or construction laborers have some form of false identity documents.

Meanwhile, California's bloated prison system has average annual costs of $23,000 per inmate. Turning hundreds of thousands of hard-working, tax-paying minimum-wage gardeners and busboys into prison inmates—at a cost of tens of billions of dollars—hardly seems a sensible means of solving the state's budget problems. A state that pays generous welfare benefits to those who don't work and imprisons those who do defies rationality.

And Prop. 187's public school provisions make false papers even more likely. To keep the public schools from expelling their 6- or 7-year-old children, many immigrant mothers will undoubtedly acquire false documents and risk a five-year prison sentence. For the land of liberty to flood its prisons with identity-card violators seems an abomination.

How do the principal advocates of the initiative respond to these charges, which I raised with them privately during my recent Republican primary challenge to Gov. Pete Wilson? One prominent SOS supporter claimed that much of the initiative was "obviously unconstitutional" and would be thrown out by the courts. Another felt that judges would refuse to enforce a law so clearly unjust. But one fervent grass-roots activist had the simplest defense, arguing that SOS was *intended* to be unworkable and bankrupt the state, thereby forcing Washington to finally "do

JONATHAN NOUROK

something" to stop illegal immigration—such as planting land mines along our southern border. And these are the views of the initiative's supporters!

Despite its anti–welfare state trappings, then, Prop. 187 is extremely bad law, and is not a measure any sincere conservative or libertarian should support. It also masks the real issue in California and elsewhere, which is not illegal immigration, but immigration period.

NEARLY ALL THOSE GROUPS IN THE FOREfront of the crusade against illegal immigration are just as hostile to the legal kind and are simply using the former issue as a stalking horse for the latter. And aside from the environmentalists (who oppose immigration as a source of economic and population growth) and union members (who hate immigrants as much as Japanese cars and for the same reason), most of the opposition to immigration has strong racial overtones, since the majority of America's new (post-1965) immigrants have been Asians and Hispanics.

There is a great unspoken fear that the existence of ethnic separatist policies such as affirmative action and bilingual education combined with large-scale immigration will lead to the balkanization of our society, and that our welfare system will cause lesser-skilled immigrants to follow the black underclass down the path to a seemingly endless cycle of dependency and crime. The future growth of a gigantic and hostile immigrant underclass terrifies white middle-class Californians, living in a state that is already 30 percent Hispanic and 10 percent Asian.

Those fears are understandable, but unsupported by the facts. The overwhelming majority of California's immigrants are self-reliant and entrepreneurial, with strong families and low welfare-dependency and crime rates. America's Asian and Hispanic population is largely composed of immigrants and their children, and these groups seem more a source of hope than of fear.

Signs of economic advancement and assimilation are widespread. Just recently, a high-school valedictorian from San Diego was discovered to have emigrated illegally from Mexico as a child; this follows a similar case of a Mexican illegal immigrant who graduated at the top of her class in San Francisco. In California the 10 most common names of recent home buyers include Martinez, Rodriguez, Garcia, Nguyen, Lee, and Wong, with the Nguyens outnumbering the Smiths 2 to 1 in affluent, conservative Orange County. In fact, nearly half of California's native-born Asians and Hispanics marry into other ethnic groups, the strongest possible evidence of assimilation at work. Those intermarriage rates are far higher than were those of Jews, Italians, or Poles as recently as the 1950s.

Since its authors view immigrant workers with as much alarm as immigrant lay-abouts, the measure mandates a five-year prison sentence (or $25,000 fine) for any illegal immigrant using false identity papers in pursuit of gainful employment.

Or consider those places in America where the deepest (usually) unspoken concerns have already been realized, and white Americans of European origin ("Anglos") have already become a minority of the population. San Jose—the third largest city in California and 11th largest in the nation—is one such example. It has a white population of less than 50 percent and contains mostly Asian and Hispanic immigrants—20 percent and 30 percent respectively—including large numbers of impoverished illegal immigrants. San Jose has a flourishing economy, the lowest murder and robbery rates of any major city in America (less than one fifth the rates in Dallas, for example), and no significant ethnic conflict.

Or consider El Paso, Texas, the most heavily Hispanic (70 percent) of any of America's largest 50 cities. It also has one of the lowest rates of serious crime or murder, with a robbery rate just half that of Seattle, an overwhelmingly white city of similar size. The state with the lowest percentage of whites in the population (about one third) is Hawaii, hardly a boiling cauldron of racial hostility. And despite its heavy urbanization, Hawaii has among the lowest crime rates of any state in the nation, with less violent crime than Idaho and Nebraska.

Furthermore, immigration remains crucial to some of the most important sectors of the American economy. Silicon Valley depends upon immigrant professionals to maintain its technological edge. A third of all the engineers and chip designers there are foreign born, and if they left (or if their future inflow were cut off), America's computer industry would probably go with them.

In fact, many of the largest and most important technology companies of the 1980s in California and elsewhere were created by immigrants, including Sun Microsystems, AST, ALR, Applied Materials, Everex, and Gupta. Borland International, a premier software company worth hundreds of millions of dollars, was founded by Philippe Kahn, an illegal immigrant. Those immigrant companies have generated hundreds of thousands of jobs for native Americans and have paid billions of dollars in taxes. Without immigrants, America's unchallenged dominance in such industries as computer hardware and software, telecommunications, and biotechnology would be lost.

Today's unfolding immigration debate amounts to an attempt to snatch economic defeat from the jaws of victory. California's Prop. 187 is an early round in that debate, and it represents a referendum on the concept of immigration. If it wins, America loses. ®

Ron K. Unz, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur, received over a third of the vote in his Republican primary challenge to Gov. Pete Wilson of California.

Virtual Community Standards

By Mike Godwin

Prosecutors are using local definitions of obscenity to censor the global Net.

Convicted cyberporn couple Carleen and Robert Thomas

WE'RE NOW PAST THE FIRST wave of Internet publicity. That was the wave in which mainstream news stories about the Internet increased one hundredfold—the wave in which jokes about the "information superhighway" crept into Letterman and Leno monologues.

But the second wave of Internet publicity—the one warning of the darker, more dangerous aspects of global computer networks—is now upon us. And for many journalists and prosecutors, no specter is darker than that of pornography online.

Take for example the July 12 *Los Angeles Times* story about the discovery of a pornography cache on the computers at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories. The story, by *Times* staff writer Adam Bauman, is a hopelessly confused mishmash of various computer terrors: computer crime, espionage, criminal copyright infringement. The lead paragraph of the piece breathlessly combines those threads with the notion that computer "hackers" were using pornography *on government computers* in ways that Bauman told readers "[d]ramatically illustrat[e] the security problems posed by the rapid growth of the Internet computer network."

Never mind that careful readers of the *Los Angeles Times* story could find no evidence that the porn had ever been used in any way that compromised the system's security—the hook had been set. Bauman and his editors knew that sex on the Net was a guaranteed draw. Of course, to Net habitues, a report that a government computer had been found to contain "more than 1,000 pornographic images" was anything but news. As students of the history of communications media could have predicted, users of Usenet and similar networks began exploring ways of transmitting sex-related material as soon as scanners and bandwidth became reasonably cheap. In the online crowd, stories about stockpiles of pornographic GIF (Graphic Image Format) files are unlikely to inspire much more than a yawn.

But in the law-enforcement community and the mainstream press, the prospect of online obscenity is still an eye-grabber (although it should be noted that the Lawrence Livermore worker who stashed porn on government systems has been indicted on theft-of-computer-services charges, not obscenity charges). That factor does much to explain the hoopla surrounding the obscenity prosecution of Robert and Carleen Thomas of Milpitas, California.

AT FIRST GLANCE, THE CASE MAY SEEM little different from the average obscenity prosecution. Sure, there's a computer bulletin-board system (BBS) involved, but there's nothing new about prosecuting pornography distributors in conservative states like Tennessee, is there?

Except that this BBS wasn't in Tennessee. It was in California. But that didn't stop Tennessee prosecutors from going after it. Because of the way BBSs normally operate, a conservative jurisdiction like Memphis may be in a position to dictate what's allowable on BBSs all over the country, from New York City to San Francisco. For this reason, the prosecution of the Thomases and their "Amateur Action BBS" calls into question the continuing validity of the Supreme Court's 1973 obscenity decision in *Miller v. California*. That case, which was designed to allow communities to set their own standards of what is acceptable and what is obscene, now has been used for just the opposite purpose—it has allowed a Memphis prosecutor to dictate the content of a computer system in California.

The facts of the case are straightforward. The Thomases are the system operators (sysops) of an adults-only sexually oriented BBS in Milpitas, California. The operator of a BBS typically dedicates a computer and one or more phone lines at his home or business for the use of a "virtual community" of users. Each user calls up the BBS (using a modem connected to his or her telephone) and leaves public messages that can be read by all other users or private mail that can be read by a particular user. BBSs become forums—digital nightclubs, salons, and Hyde Park corners—for their users, and users with similar interests can associate with one another without being hindered by the accidents of geography. A BBS also can be used to trade in computer files, programs, and digital images, including sexually graphic images.

A Tennessee postal inspector, working

MEMPHIS COMMERCIAL APPEAL

closely with an assistant U.S. attorney in Memphis, became a member of the Thomases' BBS. Once he had become a member, he did three things: He downloaded sexually oriented images, ordered a videotape (which was delivered via UPS), and sent an unsolicited child-porn video to the Thomases. This led to a federal indictment with nearly a dozen obscenity counts, most based on the downloads. The indictment also included one child-pornography count, based on the unsolicited video.

At trial, the Memphis jury convicted the Thomases on all the obscenity counts but acquitted them on the child-porn count. (A reporter at the scene who interviewed jurors said they believed the child-porn count smacked of entrapment.) The Thomases now face sentencing on the 11 obscenity convictions, each carrying a maximum sentence of five years in prison and $250,000 in fines.

Now that an increasing number of Americans participate in "virtual communities," does it make sense to have what those citizens are allowed to bring into their own homes be dictated by the arbitrary fact of where their physical homes happen to be?

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE CONVICtion in the Thomases' case is two decades old, and it reflects both an outdated understanding of "community" and the ongoing desire of some prosecutors and much of the religious right to turn back the clock regarding sexually explicit materials. It seems clear that by exploiting both the ambiguities of current obscenity law and the media's hunger for any crime stories related to sexual materials, these

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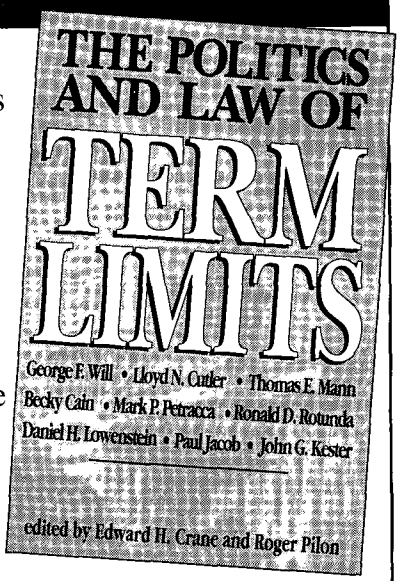
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social conservatives hope both to "chill" the spread of sexual materials on the Net and to establish a broad, national scope for prosecutions of that material.

The irony is that a *national* standard of obscenity was what the Supreme Court had hoped to avoid. By creating a system of obscenity law based on "community standards," Chief Justice Warren Burger was trying to prevent the standards of acceptability in New York City or San Francisco from dictating the standards of Kansas City or Norman, Oklahoma.

Burger's formulation went as follows: Material is "obscene" (and therefore not protected by the First Amendment) if 1) the average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the material, taken as a whole, arouses immoral lustful desire (or, in the Court's language, appeals to the "prurient interest"), 2) the material depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically prohibited by applicable state law, and 3) the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

(It should be noted in passing that GIFs of the *Playboy* and *Penthouse* variety are never found to be obscene—their frequent appearance in digital form on Usenet sites may create copyright problems, but they won't create obscenity problems. Remember also that "pornography" and "obscenity" are not identical categories—much pornography is not legally obscene.)

In the 21 years since *Miller v. California*, it has been held to be constitutional to prosecute any porn vendors located in more liberal jurisdictions who have knowingly or intentionally distributed obscenity into conservative jurisdictions. (This has included not only printed matter and videotapes but also scrambled television signals delivered directly to subscribers' homes.) Many large-scale commercial porn vendors have made deliberate decisions not to distribute their materials into jurisdictions likely to prosecute—postal inspectors frequently engage in "sting" operations to test whether a vendor will send obscene material into their states.

But the Thomases' case is different. Consider: A seller of adult magazines normally makes a conscious decision to send his product into the jurisdiction in which he's prosecuted, thus establishing criminal intent for the purpose of an obscenity-distribution prosecution. In contrast, a BBS operator may be wholly unaware of the distribution—it may occur overnight, for example—due to the automatic operation of his software.

What's more, even if the Thomases attempted to screen their users on a state-by-state basis, there's no guarantee that this attempt would protect them—a user could simply lie about which state he is calling from, or he could obtain a membership while living in California yet maintain it after he moves to Tennessee. Since a BBS operator cannot block out calls from conservative jurisdictions, there is inherent vulnerability for a BBS operator that exceeds that for traditional pornography distributors. While the Thomases' conviction with regard to the UPS-delivered video is likely to stand on traditional grounds, their convictions with regard to the downloaded images raise a number of critical issues.

The Supreme Court's attempt to escape the choice between setting a national standard for obscenity and abolishing obscenity law altogether has led to a constitutional regime in which the most conservative jurisdictions can set the standards for the rest of us.

FOR EXAMPLE, DOES IT MAKE SENSE FOR A court to infer a defendant's criminal intent to distribute obscenity into Tennessee merely because neither he nor his BBS can ensure that someone cannot download that material into the state? And does it make sense to define "community standards" solely in terms of geographic communities? Now that an increasing number of Americans find themselves participating in "virtual communities" on services such as America Online, CompuServe, Prodigy, and the WELL, does it make sense to have what those citizens are allowed to bring into their own homes be dictated by the arbitrary fact of where their physical homes happen to be?

More important, the case turns the whole community-standards doctrine on its head. If it's wrong for New York City to set the standards for Norman, it's surely just as wrong for Memphis to set the standards for Milpitas.

Until those issues are addressed, this case will have a chilling effect all over the country, as BBSs either censor themselves or cease operations in order to avoid prosecution. The case sends a frightening message to virtual communities: "It doesn't matter if you're abiding by your own community's standards—you have to abide by Memphis's as well." At the same time, both the Thomas case and the Lawrence Livermore case signal new opportunities for prosecutors who are increasingly uninterested in going after traditional adult book and video stores: Bust someone for online porn and you'll make national headlines.

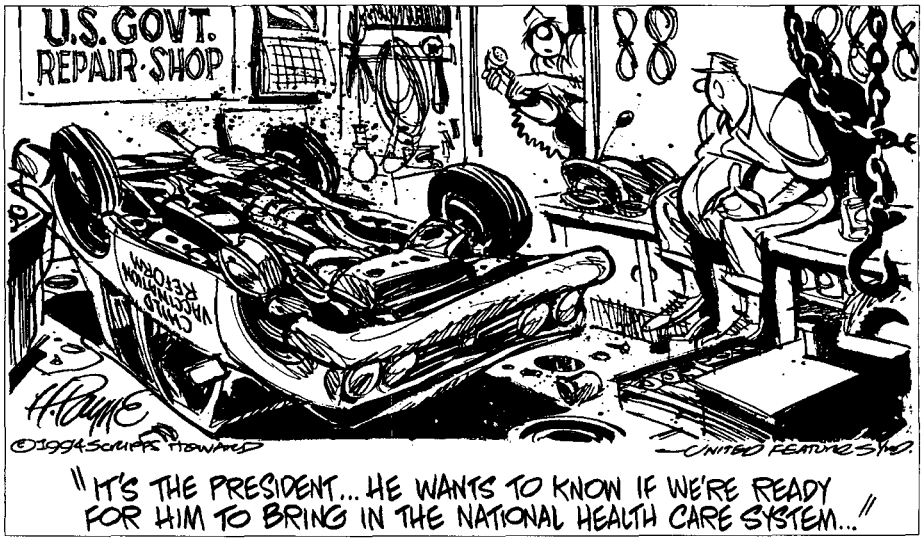
What those cases signal about freedom of expression in this country is clear. The high court's attempt in *Miller* to escape the choice between setting a national standard for obscenity and abolishing obscenity law altogether has led to a constitutional regime in which the most conservative jurisdictions in the country can set the standards for the rest of us. Which means that so long as the press shows an appetite for this kind of story, and so long as prosecutors are ready to feed that appetite, no carrier of online sexual materials in any jurisdiction is safe. ®

Mike Godwin (godwin@eff.org) is staff counsel of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a public-interest civil-liberties organization based in Washington, D.C.

Shots in the Dark

By Robert Pollock

The saga of the Vaccines for Children program



IT WAS A RALLY SET AGAINST THE BACKground of the New York City skyline. The Statue of Liberty towered behind President Clinton as he pounded the podium with such force that the presidential seal fell off. It was August 1, and the White House was trying to save a very unpopular health plan. We must pass his plan "this year," Clinton repeated incessantly. "Don't let the fearmongers, don't let the dividers, don't let the people who disseminate false information frighten the United States Congress into walking away from the opportunity of a lifetime."

Why is "this year" the "opportunity of a lifetime"? Maybe because by next year, people will have had an opportunity to witness the first phase of ClintonCare in action. The Vaccines for Children program is scheduled to start October 1, and an administration eager to take credit for at least one successful piece of legislation before the fall elections has been strangely silent about this one.

Such silence stands in marked contrast to the confidence with which Clinton launched his first health-care policy initiative in February 1993, accusing the pharmaceutical industry of "pursuing profits at the expense of our children." Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) added his voice: "The laissez-faire attitude of the past administration meant that business too often was not asked to participate in meeting urgent national needs."

The new administration alleged that the divergence between the public good and the private interests of vaccine makers meant that only about half of the nation's preschoolers were properly vaccinated. In 1982, the average cost for a complete set of childhood vaccines was $23.29. In 1992, it was $243.90—a seemingly obvious example of profiteering. Thus, Clinton argued, the industry needed government intervention.

Hillary set up a working group to explore the possibility of price controls if vaccine costs exceeded "voluntary" guidelines. Bill pushed for "universal purchase"—he wanted the federal government to buy and distribute all childhood vaccines produced in the United States. In August 1993, Congress passed a compromise. The Vaccines for Children program would purchase one third of the national supply at a forced discount of half price. The government then would distribute the vaccines free to private physicians who could administer them to Medicaid recipients, the uninsured, the underinsured, and Native Americans.

SOUNDS SIMPLE. BUT FROM THE ORIGINAL rhetoric to the approaching reality of implementation, the facts have been getting in the way. First, people began to notice that every reliable source showed a much higher vaccination rate than Clinton alleged. His low figures come from 1991, and are disputed by a more recent 1993 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey, which puts the rate between 80 percent and 90 percent.

When the VFC program was unveiled, administration officials had easy access to 1992 CDC figures showing an 80 percent immunization rate—and it was well known among experts that 96 percent of 5-year-olds are properly vaccinated, because they are required to be to enter kindergarten. The administration has denied trying to deceive the public.

Second, if the vaccine business is so lucrative, reaping high profits "at the expense of our children," why has the number of producers fallen from 12 to five in the last 10 years? Because the nationwide litigation explosion has hit the pharmaceutical industry hard. Fear of liability is the reason Merck is the only company that will make the unpatented MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine in the United States. And $8.00 of an $11.50 dose of DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus) vaccine reflects the cost of liability insurance.

In addition, new federal excise taxes total about $25 for the full set of childhood vaccines, more than the set itself cost in 1982. The cost of developing and marketing new drugs also has risen from an average of $80 million in 1982 to more than $200 million in 1992, much of which

HENRY PAYNE

is the cost of winning FDA approval.

But the main cause of the higher vaccine cost is a better and more comprehensive product. Since 1982, new vaccines for hepatitis B and bacterial meningitis have been developed and added to the recommended schedule. Hence, cost comparisons between 1982 and 1992 are meaningless.

Nor is the cost of a full set of childhood vaccines a one-time barrier to vaccination, as the administration presented it. That $243.90 is the total cost for a set of shots administered over the course of *16 years*, not up front. The shots cost an average of $15.24 per year.

And all of the groups covered by the VFC program already are eligible for free vaccinations at public clinics. Clinton never mentioned that program.

Finally, 12 states already have programs similar to the new Clinton buy-up initiative and their vaccination rates aren't significantly higher than the rest of the country. The inescapable conclusion: "Vaccine cost is not an important barrier," in the words of the General Accounting Office report on the VFC program issued in July.

THE "PLAN" ITSELF WAS AS HOLLOW AS the anti-capitalist rhetoric behind it. The Department of Health and Human Services was given wide discretion under the authorization bill, which had been formulated without considering who would run the program. First HHS tried the Defense Department, a logical choice since advocates of big government like to justify their programs by creating the impression they are part of a war. But the Pentagon declined, as did the Department of Veterans Affairs.

So the job eventually fell to the much-maligned General Services Administration, usually known for distributing items such as toilet paper and paper clips to federal office workers. By using the GSA as a middleman, which would mean routing vaccine bound for places like California through New Jersey, the government said it could save $30 million.

But even the GAO couldn't justify that claim. Doctors now order vaccine directly from the manufacturers. In fact, both the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments recently canceled their own plans for distributing vaccines to the children of military families because they found the pharmaceutical industry already did it more cheaply than they could. HHS Secretary Donna Shalala declined congressional offers to provide extra money for the VFC program—but only if she preserved the drug industry's role as distributor of the vaccines.

The GSA, which has no experience with handling biological materials, soon drew harsh congressional criticism for its decision to store a large portion of the national supply of the temperature-sensitive vaccines at its Burlington, New Jersey, warehouse, next to rooms where the agency stores paint, turpentine, and other highly flammable materials. Sen. Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.) said that it would be "foolish in the extreme to proceed on schedule," and that because of the GSA, the program would be "an unmitigated disaster."

Twelve states already have programs similar to the Clinton buy-up initiative and their vaccination rates aren't significantly higher than the rest of the country. The conclusion: "Vaccine cost is not an important barrier," in the words of the General Accounting Office report on the program issued in July.

The critics won. In late August, the administration abandoned plans to use the GSA and the Burlington warehouse. Sources speculate that the job of storing and shipping the vaccines will be given to state agencies where they exist and remain with the manufacturers otherwise.

"We were ready to go. We did a lot of hard work, but we still took a lot of cheap shots. I guess it's just politics," GSA official Hap Connors said sullenly. Indeed, the GSA probably was ready—nobody said storing the vaccines would be the hard part—which is why the attempt to save face or the program by getting rid of the controversial New Jersey warehouse is "just politics." That change will do nothing to address the substance of the GAO's damning criticisms.

FIRST, THE VFC PROGRAM WON'T WORK. The GAO report found that the government was way behind in arranging purchase contracts with the vaccine makers, unprepared to process orders from the doctors intended to receive the vaccine, unprepared to test whether its new delivery system could ensure the potency of the temperature-sensitive vaccines (the only problem potentially solved by ditching the GSA), and unable to detect or prevent fraud and abuse. "Our review indicates that it is unlikely that [the government] can fully implement the VFC program by October 1, 1994," the report stated.

Second, the VFC program wouldn't *work* even if it did work. Because the VFC program failed to collect good baseline data, and because its effects will be nearly impossible to separate from other government immunization initiatives, we'll have no way to compare the cost and effectiveness of the VFC program to the current system. But if the GAO were betting, the agency would bet against it. "It is unlikely that the provision of free vaccines through the VFC will boost coverage in the most affected groups, for whom vaccines are already free, or among other groups when previous experience strongly suggests that this is not an important consideration for the parents....If coverage increases, it may be in spite of the VFC program," the report concluded.

But since when is reality ever allowed to stand in the way of government plans? As the attack on pharmaceutical firms began in February 1993, Clinton strategist

James Carville candidly told *The Wall Street Journal*, "We'll be trying to change the health-care system. Those who get in your way you try to run over by saying they are putting their self-interest against the national interest."

Lest anyone think that only the pharmaceutical companies got caught in the headlights of the Clinton machine, it should be remembered that their health is often directly responsible for our own. Because the VFC program will be added to existing programs, the federal government now will be buying not just one third, but about 80 percent of the nation's childhood vaccines at a forced discount price. That will surely detract from research and development budgets, both by reducing available funds and by stifling the incentive to develop new products. And cutting R&D doesn't seem to be in anyone's long-run interest.

Vaccine technology, stagnant for years, saw a renaissance in the '80s. Two new vaccines were added to the standard series, and new vaccines on the horizon include varicella, chicken pox, otitis media, respiratory syncytial virus, and rotavirus, the cause of an often lethal infant diarrheal disease.

More important, many immunologists believe they are close to developing a single-dose inoculation that will protect against all major childhood diseases. Right now, full immunization requires 15 doses delivered during at least four doctor visits—and that's just before age 2. A single-dose vaccine will end the necessity of multiple doctor visits. That inconvenience, not cost, is the primary barrier to higher immunization rates.

Credit for those technological advances must go to the pharmaceutical companies, many of which increased their R&D budgets more than fourfold during the '80s. Private industry spent about $11 billion on pharmaceutical research last year, more than the federal government's National Institutes of Health. The forced discounts of the Clinton program may make such high R&D spending impossible. And unfortunately, like so many other government programs, its major harms will go unseen. We don't know how many people already die each year because the snail-paced FDA keeps life-saving drugs off the market, and we won't know how many children will die in the future because the VFC program kept new vaccines from ever even reaching the FDA approval process. But we do know it will happen.

So not only won't the VFC program work, it will also violate the primary dictate of the Hippocratic Oath: "First, do no harm." That should be sobering medicine for anyone who still wants to rush comprehensive government-run health reform "this year." ®

Robert Pollock is REASON*'s 1994 Burton C. Gray Memorial intern.*

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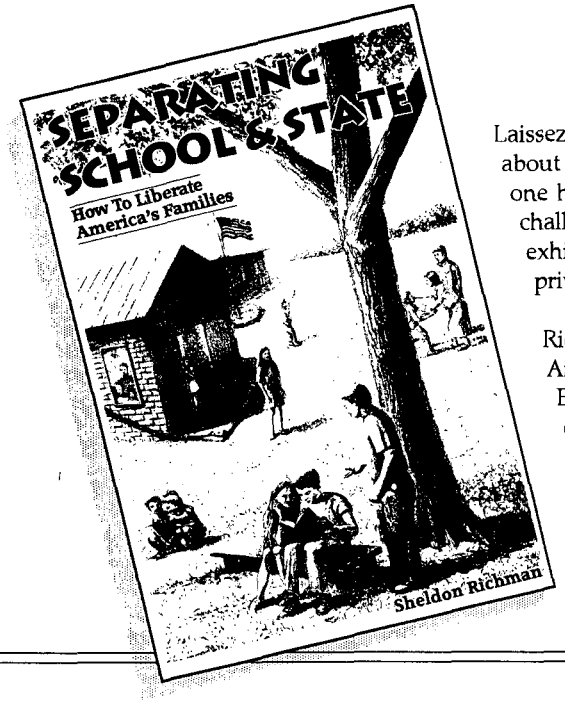

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Cooked Books

By Benjamin Zycher

A government study "proving" discrimination in bank loans doesn't add up.

"SO MUCH INJUSTICE. SO LITTLE time." That is the official battle cry of the "discrimination" police now running amok in the Clinton administration. That they may have little time left perhaps ought to give them pause, but do not bet on it: A crusade against "discrimination" is a gold mine for bureaucrats and ideologues in pursuit of bigger budgets and enhanced political power for themselves. That the greater spending and coercive authority derive from so lofty a moral goal as "antidiscrimination" creates both blindness and dishonesty on the part of the morally pure.

Consider, for instance, the 1992 study of racial discrimination in mortgage lending published by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. This plainly politicized paper has thrust the lending discrimination issue to the forefront of regulatory policy in banking, notwithstanding an econometric model that is highly suspect conceptually and poor as a predictor, variables defined poorly, and findings that disappear upon deletion of six observations out of about 3,000.

Moreover, the Boston Fed's study data include a substantial number of obvious and probable errors. For example, there are no fewer than 22 cases implying loans with large negative interest rates. One applicant with annual income of $34,000 supposedly received a $400,000 loan, to be repaid in 12 payments of $154. Another $140,000 loan was supposedly approved with a total of eight payments under $1,500.

One approved application was for a loan of $271,000 for someone with an annual income of $11,000; but the dataset indicates that this person's ratios of housing debt payments to income and total debt payments to income are zero. Another observation is similar: a loan of $245,000 was approved for an individual earning $47,000 per year, but the "front end" ratio of housing debt payments to income supposedly is zero. In all, there are no fewer than 13 large loans approved for individuals with modest incomes but with such ratios equal to zero. Other observations record "back end" ratios of total debt obligations to income lower than the ratio of only mortgage debt to income, an obvious inconsistency.

One applicant with annual income of $4,000 was approved for a $181,000 loan, while another applicant with annual income of $5,000 received a loan of $148,000. Those two latter cases, and others like them, may merely indicate that the lenders may have had other information about the borrowers' future income prospects. But even if that were the case, the Boston Fed's statistical analysis would not take such additional information into account, and so would yield misleading findings. It is just as possible, however, that the typist omitted a zero.

INDEED, SOME OF THE DATA SEEM TO BE OBvious numerical errors. One loan was reportedly approved for $979,000 for a house costing $118,000; the actual loan amount was $97,900, as reconstructed from various data sources. A $3,115,000 loan was supposedly approved for the purchase of a $445,000 house; the actual loan was for $311,500. Another approved loan was for a home purchase listed in the dataset at a price of $124,000; the actual price was $240,000, so that the true loan/value ratio of 65 percent was recorded instead at 125 percent.

One applicant supposedly was approved for a $55,000 loan to purchase a $174,000 home, even though his annual income was $30,000 and his net worth was −$7.9 million. Four other applicants with net worths between −$1.4 million and −$4.3 million reportedly were approved for loans even though their annual incomes averaged only $95,000. All of the above cases involved loans approved for white applicants, a fact that may have biased the Boston Fed's findings.

Even more curious are the cases in which applications are recorded as having been denied, but in which the "denied" loans are recorded as loans subsequently sold on the secondary market. The Boston Fed's dataset is a subset of the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data for 1990; in the HMDA data, there are 15 cases in which applications are recorded as denied but then sold on the secondary market. Of these 15 obvious inconsistencies, none is from a Hispanic applicant and one is from a black applicant. But in the Boston Fed's dataset—again, supposedly a subset of the HMDA data—there are 43 applications recorded as denied and then sold on the secondary market, of which 40 are black or Hispanic. That inconsistency remains to be explained.

It is at least plausible that other errors of similar magnitude exist in the Boston Fed's data along with numerous errors less obvious. Monthly and annual income figures often are inconsistent by substantial proportions. Another serious problem is presented by special programs for affordable housing. Applicants for such programs are disproportionately members of minority groups, and applicants are often found to be overqualified for the special programs. The Boston Fed study defines such overqualified applicants as "rejected" for mortgage loans even though the "rejection" has nothing to do with a conventional mortgage application.

More generally, David Horne of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors reports that data errors of varying magnitudes were found by examiners in 58 per-

cent of the applications actually denied but predicted by the Boston Fed's econometric model to be approved. Ted Day and Stan Liebowitz of the University of Texas at Dallas report that of the 2,932 applications from the Boston Fed data that they examined, "hundreds" failed to pass various consistency tests.

WELL, WHO CARES ABOUT A FEW MISTAKES when "discrimination" is the target and bigger budgets are the goal? Accordingly, 10 federal agencies published a "Policy Statement On Discrimination In Lending," earlier this year. That

No criminal intent is necessary for violation of the lending discrimination law, and discovery of violation is to be made through the use of subjective numerical games played by ideologues of the sort who have already shown themselves to be pretty fast and loose with their analysis.

10 federal bureaus have clambered aboard this bandwagon says more about political and budgetary potential than about actual illegal discrimination by lending institutions. The "Policy Statement" declares, "The 1992 Federal Reserve Bank of Boston study on lending discrimination, Congressional hearings, and agency investigations have indicated that race is a factor in some lending decisions."

It is not clear whether by "indicated" the authors mean "demonstrated" or merely "asserted." The "Policy Statement" is based upon the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, the two statutes that specifically proscribe discrimination in lending. Liability under the two statutes is civil, not criminal, thus reducing the evidentiary standard required to prove discrimination. This evidence can be of "overt" discrimination, of "disparate treatment" on the basis of such prohibited characteristics as skin color, or of a "disparate impact" on applicants correlated with prohibited characteristics. Such disparate impacts would be illegal if "not justified by business necessity" or if a "less discriminatory alternative" exists.

The statement asserts that "Disparate treatment may more likely occur in the treatment of applicants who are neither clearly well-qualified nor clearly unqualified," because such cases leave more room for lender discretion in assistance and approval. Of course, "gray area" cases leave more room for discretion on the part of the enforcement agencies as well.

The likelihood of such enforcement discretion is enhanced by the assertion in the statement that "a pattern or practice of disparate treatment on a prohibited basis may also be established through a valid statistical analysis of detailed loan file information, provided that the analysis controls for possible legitimate explanations for differences in treatment."

That the interpretation of such econometric evidence is both science and art is clear to anyone familiar with the economic analysis of data. But will the agencies' lawyers understand this? Will the congressmen and senators considering the agencies' budget requests understand it?

Even without explicit discriminatory intent, some lending practices could have disparate impacts correlated with race. The statement makes it clear that such practices with disparate impact may be illegal if they are not justified by "business necessity" or if there exists a "less discriminatory alternative." But it is not clear just what constitutes a "business necessity." The "Policy Statement" states only that "factors that may be relevant to the justification [of business necessity] could include cost and profitability." If it means business survival, it is hard to imagine what in the context of lending discrimination might be "necessary," that is, any decision without which bankruptcy becomes certain.

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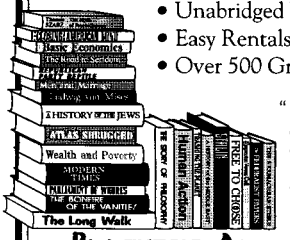

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Banks' lower profits caused by regulation would eventually drive up interest rates, causing lower demand for loans. Under such conditions, all lenders might simply lend less, and none would have to leave the market. Is avoidance of that effect "necessary"?

In any event, it would be hard to know or demonstrate that a practice is necessary until it's challenged by regulators. And even with demonstration of an undefined business necessity, a lending practice still might be judged illegal if a "less discriminatory alternative" exists. It is unclear from the "Policy Statement" how to compare a given lending practice with an alternative based on the degree of discrimination they yield. Perhaps a "less discriminatory" alternative is one that results in more lending to members of protected groups; but since a given bank can lend only so much, more lending to one group necessarily leaves less credit (that is, more "discrimination") for another. Besides, if a practice is truly necessary, then by definition there is no alternative, whether less discriminatory or not.

THE SECTION ON "DISPARATE IMPACT" IN the statement also leaves dangerously wide scope for regulatory discretion: "Frequently [the existence of a disparate impact] is [established] through a quantitative or statistical analysis....Not every member of the group must be adversely affected for the practice to have a disparate impact. Evidence of discriminatory intent is not necessary to establish that a policy or practice adopted or implemented by a lender that has a disparate impact is in violation of the [FHA] or ECOA." This means that no criminal intent is necessary for violation of this law, according to the bureaucrats, and that discovery of violation is to be made through the use of subjective numerical games played by ideologues of the sort who have already shown themselves in the Boston Fed study to be pretty fast and loose with their analysis.

Under such standards, can lenders know if they are in compliance? If not, then it is likely that they will be driven inexorably to adopt lending quotas. The statement notes that "a reason to believe" that the ECOA has been violated requires that "a reasonable person would conclude from an examination of all credible information available that discrimination has occurred." Is it reasonable to expect "reasonable" persons to agree on the implications of econometric findings? It seems reasonable to doubt it.

The "Policy Statement" notes that HMDA data don't provide enough information for statistical analysis of discrimination because the data omit such important variables as credit histories and debt ratios. Nevertheless, the statement argues that, "HMDA data are useful...for identifying lenders whose practices may warrant investigation for compliance with fair lending laws." Given the ambiguity inherent in data on lending decisions, and given the political volatility of the discrimination issue, such use of HMDA data in the search for culprits can prove perverse.

For example, suppose two lenders—the Equal Opportunity Bank and the Bigotry Bank—are open for business. Minority applicants know that only the most wealthy and famous among them will be approved for a loan at the Bigotry Bank. Accordingly, almost all minority applicants waste no time and effort there and instead attempt to do business with the Equal Opportunity Bank. The only minority applicants applying at the Bigotry Bank are those sufficiently wealthy or famous to be guaranteed approval. The Bigotry Bank will have a spotless record—all of its minority loan applications will be approved—while the Equal Opportunity Bank will have a substantial number of denials. The use of HMDA data to find discrimination malefactors is likely to ensnare lenders analogous to the Equal Opportunity Bank precisely because of their reputations for fairness.

ON THE BASIS OF POOR DATA AND ANALYsis, regulators now are delaying bank mergers until lenders accused of bias establish special funds for minority lending or for "compensatory" payments to past loan applicants who were denied credit and agree to enhance marketing and other efforts among potential minority customers. Lawsuits charging past racial discrimination are being settled along similar lines.

In D.C., for example, the Chevy Chase Federal Savings Bank recently settled, admitting no wrongdoing, with the federal government for allegedly ignoring predominantly black neighborhoods in its branch placement. No specific acts of discrimination were even alleged.

As part of its penance for not making business decisions that please the feds, Chevy Chase Federal Savings must commit $140 million in home loans—at lower than market rates—to areas dictated by regulators. Those sorts of charges, adverse publicity, defense costs, and expensive settlements work as a tax on lenders. The long-run implications for access to capital of discrimination accusations based on shoddy data and poor analysis are unlikely to prove salutary for anyone, even "protected" minorities.

Do-goodism is as old as sin. In the do-gooders' rhetoric, the problems of our inner cities are not the fruit of oppressive taxation and regulation, destructive welfare policies, the mindless drug crusade, or an education system monopolized by a government insatiable in its quest for coercive and confiscatory power. Nor is the cause our professional political class, the central characteristics of which are ignorance, ineptitude, and an all-powerful instinct for self-preservation. No, the cause is "discrimination" practiced by evil capitalists.

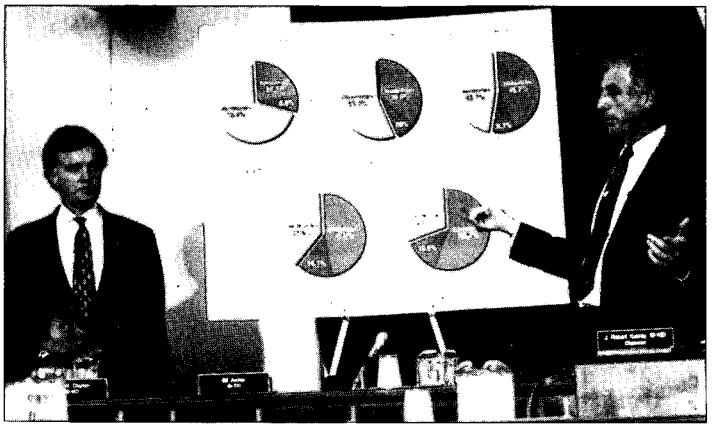
Analytic sloppiness, dishonesty, verdict first/trial later, and all the other hallmarks of media politics are much in evidence in the attacks on lending "discrimination." Nonetheless, the bureaucrats and the politicians should not be called liars. Instead, they are truth-challenged. ®

Benjamin Zycher is vice president for research at the Milken Institute for Job and Capital Formation in Santa Monica, California. This essay is based upon an article by Benjamin Zycher and Timothy A. Wolfe in the 1994 Number 2 issue of Regulation.

Retirement Wrangle

By Rick Henderson

A bipartisan commission tackles an old-age problem.



Sen. Jack Danforth (R-Mo.) (right), co-chairman of the Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement and Tax Reform along with Bob Kerrey (D-Neb.) (left), says that both assume that whatever the commission does to reform entitlement programs, "net increases in taxes are not going to be a part of it."

"THE [RETIREMENT] date of 65 was set in 1937 because that was your life expectancy," says Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.) of the Social Security program. "They hoped you'd die at 65 and then there really wouldn't be a lot of payout. Now a person retires at 65, or 70, and [you] have a life expectancy of 10, 11, 13 years—women [longer] than men—and that can't work."

Social Security's long-term insolvency is only one issue Simpson and the 31 other members of the Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement and Tax Reform are confronting. In December, the commission will recommend changes in the tax structure and in "entitlements," the automatic-spending programs that support retirees, the poor, and farmers, among others.

Such automatic spending is exploding. In 1963, nearly three-fourths of federal spending was discretionary, spent on such items as national defense, roads, and space exploration. By contrast, nearly half the 1993 federal budget consisted of spending on the four big entitlement programs—Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and federal pensions—plus interest on the debt. In another 10 years, more than 70 percent of the budget will be on automatic pilot.

Heading the commission is Sen. Bob Kerrey (D-Neb.), who refused to vote for President Clinton's 1993 budget unless the president promised to establish this commission. Although Kerrey made national health insurance the centerpiece of his 1992 presidential campaign, he has since become a trenchant critic of rampant entitlement spending, including any new health-care entitlement. And he hasn't ruled out another run at the White House; a September 1 Associated Press story reported that a prominent Democratic donor had approached Kerrey about challenging Clinton in 1996. If the commission is considered a success, it could fuel Kerrey's larger ambitions.

The commission's ideological mix includes Washington power-broker Rep. Dan Rostenkowski (D-Ill.), federal-spending critic Rep. Christopher Cox (R-Calif.), welfare-statist Robert Greenstein of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and iconoclast Simpson.

Ideally, the commission will make specific proposals for President Clinton to incorporate into his fiscal 1996 budget proposal. But a deep division in the commission between tax raisers and benefit cutters, combined with the political explosiveness of both approaches, suggests that the commission's main role will be educational, not policy-making.

Consider some sober findings presented in the commission's initial report, released in August. Unless Congress changes the tax or benefit structures of entitlement programs, entitlement spending and interest on the debt will consume all federal tax revenue by 2012. And even if non-entitlement spending remains constant as a percentage of national income, by 2030 total federal spending will exceed 37 percent of GDP, compared with 22 percent now. While tax increases in the early '80s temporarily bailed out Social Security, by 2020 the program will run annual deficits that exceed $220 billion. And by the turn of the century, both Medicare insurance funds will be bankrupt.

MUCH OF THE COMMISSION'S ACTIVITY will revolve around Social Security, which Kerrey has compared to the high-voltage lines that power subways. The program, he says, is "the third rail of politics. Touch it and you're dead." Proposing benefit cuts for current or soon-to-be retirees would sound the death knell for most elected officials. Almost 15 percent of the population is 65 years or older, and older Americans vote more frequently than any other age group.

Longer life expectancies combined with generous, tax-funded retirement programs have made a new lifestyle possible. Retired persons can now expect to live independently of their children for a decade or longer. Says Rep. Alex McMillan (R-N.C.), one of the commissioners, "We have institutionalized retirement in my lifetime." But most "independent" retirees depend upon government programs, rather than private savings and investments.

If today's elected officials refuse to change retirement programs, however, Americans in the early 21st century will

RICHARD A. BLOOM

face an authentic economic crisis. Few of today's workers save enough to ease their dependence on government programs. The nation's saving rate, which averaged around 8 percent of GDP in the 1960s and '70s, has fallen to 5 percent. And in a paper presented before the American Council for Capital Formation this summer, Princeton University economist Douglas Bernheim cited low savings rates by baby boomers to assert that the lure of a retirement "safety net" may further reduce the likelihood that people will save.

So the commission may actually risk the wrath of retirees' advocacy groups and suggest one positive proposal: Increase the retirement age. Last year, the Cato Institute's William Niskanen and Stephen Moore proposed increasing the retirement age by two months a year indefinitely. If implemented in 1995, the retirement age would rise to 66 by 2001, 67 by 2007, and so on. While this change would reduce Social Security spending by less than $10 billion over the first five years, it would save hundreds of billions of dollars in the long run. And this incremental change will barely disturb the plans of those persons nearing retirement. Rep. J.J. Pickle (D-Tex.) introduced a bill in April that would start such a gradual rise.

Also in April, Rostenkowski introduced a bill that would slightly reduce next year's cost-of-living increase, alter the long-term benefit formula, and raise the retirement age for people born after 1960 from 65 to 67. The bill would increase taxes on Social Security benefits for people earning more than $25,000 a year and raise payroll taxes slightly in 2020 and 2055. Several commissioners commented favorably on Rostenkowski's proposals at commission meetings.

Those moderate changes could make a huge impact on Social Security's solvency. In a report prepared for the advocacy group Citizens Against Government Waste, former Treasury Department undersecretary Gary Robbins projected that the gradual increases in retirement age Pickle proposed would reduce Social Security's long-term deficit by 50 percent. Rostenkowski's benefit cuts would reduce the Social Security deficit by another 25 percent.

Free-market economists and a few conservative commissioners, however, oppose taxing benefits as a way to "means-test" entitlement programs. Robbins and the Cato Institute's Moore argue that higher taxes on payrolls and benefits would retard economic growth and make entitlement programs *less* solvent.

For instance, the Concord Coalition's President Peter Peterson, a commission member, advocates a draconian form of means-testing for high-income retirees. He would impose an additional 7.5-percent tax on all benefits that go to households with incomes above $35,000, and increase the tax rate by 5 percent for each extra $10,000 of income.

Though Peterson claims to favor policies that boost savings rates, the Cato Institute's Moore says this plan would "punish people for saving. Most people get their retirement incomes from personal savings." Moore argues that means-testing programs through tax increases would push working Social Security recipients out of the workplace and make individuals more dependent on tax-funded retirement programs. Peterson, Moore says, "really doesn't think incentives matter."

TAXING SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS ISN'T the only tax increase with support on the commission, however. At the commission's opening meeting in June, left-liberals, led by Greenstein, United Mine Workers Union President Richard Trumka, and former Rep. Tom Downey (D-N.Y.) urged the group to confront "tax expenditures," such as home-mortgage and business-expense tax deductions. The liberals asserted that wealthy Americans unfairly benefit from those tax exemptions and that cutting them could raise federal revenue.

During their opening statements, Cox, Rep. Bill Archer (R-Tex.), and Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.) challenged that idea. "The underlying rationale of the tax-expenditure concept," Archer said, "is that the government owns all of the earnings and wealth of all Americans, and that it is only through the grace of government, determined by Congress, that they get to keep any of it."

As the discussion between commissioners became testy, Kerrey and his co-chairman, Sen. Jack Danforth (R-Mo.), tried to defuse the situation. "One thing Bob and I have assumed," Danforth said, "is that in whatever we do, net increases in taxes are not going to be a part of it."

In ideological contrast to the tax raisers, Cox and Wallop take the most radical approach of anyone on the commission: They want to challenge the concept of entitlement. At the first meeting, Wallop said, "The commission will succeed only if we end the fantasy that individuals and groups of Americans have a right to, are entitled to, the benefits financed by federal tax revenue." He refused to endorse the commission's initial report because it did not include a statement saying that no one has a constitutional right to the income of another.

For his part, Cox proposes subjecting the entire federal budget, except for Social Security and interest on the debt, to annual review. Federal spending programs would have specific price tags attached, and Congress would have to approve the price. Cox says that entitlement programs "aren't really uncontrollable—they're just uncontrolled."

Such proposals will be unlikely from this or any other "independent commission." Notes Moore, who was a staff member on the deficit-fighting 1989 National Economic Commission, "The only way these commissions work is when they do not have too-ambitious agendas and [when] they can find areas [for reform] with nearly universal agreement."

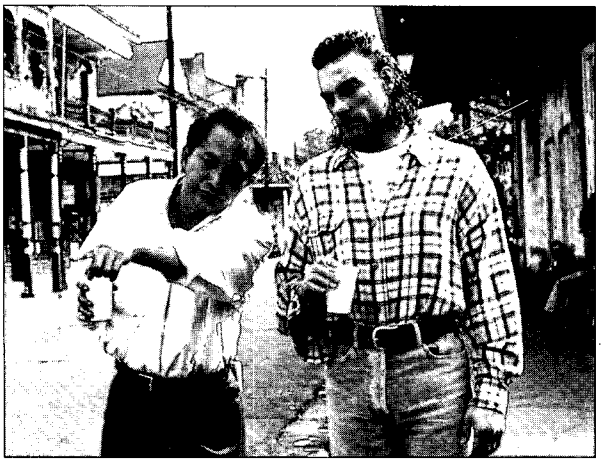
For now, look for the commission to do no more than tinker with the status quo. As one source close to the commission put it: "We have two [political] parties—one that's for expanding the state and one that passionately defends the existing statism but wants no more." ®

Rick Henderson is Washington Editor of REASON.

Spectacular Cinema

By Charles Oliver

Why Hong Kong movies are beating Hollywood at its own game



Hong Kong director John Woo speaking with Jean-Claude Van Damme, star of his American directoral debut, *Hard Target*

THROUGHOUT THE WORLD American cinema reigns supreme. Hollywood movies capture up to 90 percent of the box office in many countries. European film makers cry for protection from American films. They claim that they cannot compete with U.S. movies and note that in some European countries film making has virtually stopped.

But movie makers in Hong Kong aren't complaining about U.S. competition. This city-state continues to turn out more than 100 films a year, films that dominate the box office, despite competition from American films. Hong Kong movies are also popular exports throughout Asia, and they have attracted a small but growing following in the United States and Europe.

Over the past two decades, government-subsidized European film makers have indulged their own increasingly obscure visions. And they have watched their share of their home nations' box office plummet. Meanwhile, American studios have become parts of ever-larger conglomerates, and they have relied more and more upon market surveys to determine which films they should make and upon audience reaction at test screenings to figure out how to edit those films.

But Hong Kong film makers have pursued a third path. Like the Americans, they make movies for a mass audience, but the Hong Kong version of movie capitalism is much more entrepreneurial. Instead of rehashing the old, Hong Kong film makers seem to compete with one another to see who can be the most original, the most daring, the most inventive.

Hong Kong cinema is characterized by incredible energy, dazzling visuals, and inventive action sequences. The word that most often crops up in Western descriptions of Hong Kong cinema is *ultra*: ultraviolent, ultrasexy, ultragory, ultramelodramatic, ultrafast.

As actor-director Samo Hung has said of the Hong Kong approach to stunt work, "I think we are usually more concerned with finding the line of safety...and then seeing how much further we can push it." Hong Kong movies push many of the accepted lines.

ARISTOTLE SAID THAT THE PURPOSE OF tragedy is to arouse pity and terror. Hong Kong film makers may not have read *The Poetics*, but they seem to have discovered this principle for themselves. Watching those films is like drinking strong whiskey—both deliver a very big kick. But it seems to be what many people want. The popularity of these films is proof that nothing succeeds like excess.

The best place to begin looking at Hong Kong cinema is with Jackie Chan. The most popular star in Asia, Chan is a link between the chopsocky films of the 1970s and new Hong Kong cinema. A former child actor, Chan began to really make a name for himself in the 1970s, when he was in his early 20s, in kung fu films. Boyish looking and charismatic, Chan was touted as the next Bruce Lee. But Chan soon began to create a different niche for himself. In contrast to Lee's swift and lethal-looking martial arts moves, Chan developed an acrobatic fighting style that incorporated quite a bit of slapstick and mugging. This mixture of humor and violence remains a Chan trademark.

But in the 1980s, Chan moved from chopsocky films into broader action films. Unlike Western action films, Jackie Chan's movies combine elements of broad physical comedy with nail-biting stunts, all at a breakneck pace.

Those films make terrific use of Chan's natural athletic ability. Like Samo Hung and many other Hong Kong stars, he does his own stunts. Again, this speaks to the drive of the people who make these films that so many are willing to endanger life and limb to please their audiences.

Chan's films are filled with stunts, which are their big selling point. After watching a few, one wonders how the man ever lived to see 30. For instance, in *Twin Dragons*, Chan is battling the bad guys in a car factory. At one point he falls to the ground to escape the villains and rolls under a car supported by hydraulic lifts. The bad guys release the car, and it falls to the floor, barely missing Chan as he rolls underneath. Just as he's getting to his feet, they release another car from a ramp. As it rolls toward him, Chan jumps the car and runs over the top of it. If either of those bits had gone wrong, he could have been killed.

And for all of the stereotypes of Asians as conformists, there seems to be a big place for individualists and nonconformists in Hong Kong cinema. The heroes that

MELISSA MOSELEY/UNIVERSAL CITY STUDIOS, INC.

Jackie Chan portrays would be familiar types to American audiences: the rogue cop who defies his superiors and department procedures to battle crooks; the daredevil soldier of fortune who risks his life to obtain ancient treasures.

ONE CAN'T TALK ABOUT CONTEMPORARY Hong Kong cinema without discussing director John Woo. Like Chan, Woo started out in the 1970s, directing his share of kung fu films and slapstick comedies. But in 1986, he wrote and directed *A Better Tomorrow*, establishing him as Hong Kong's premier director and making his frequent star Chow Yun-Fat the second biggest star in Asia, after Chan.

A contemporary gangster flick, *A Better Tomorrow* floored audiences with its fast-paced, expertly choreographed, and seemingly endless gun battles. Those gunfights became one of Woo's trademarks in his subsequent films. In fact, his films are filled with so much bloodshed, they make the most violent American films look positively anemic by comparison.

Still, Woo's violence is not nihilistic. Indeed, critics often talk of "heroic bloodshed" when referring to Woo's films. Usually, this refers to the fact that his heroes have to distinguish themselves by taking on numerous enemies and spilling their blood. But it also refers to the fact that Woo's heroes inevitably must spill their own blood. Woo's films often focus on a contrast: The spirit can be built up only if the body is ripped apart.

One of the striking things about Woo's films is that innocent people sometimes get gunned down, by mistake, by his heroes. That's something that would never be seen in an American film. Americans expect their heroes to be perfect. But Woo's heroes are fallible. One of the heroes of *A Better Tomorrow 2* asks, "Why is it so difficult for a man to be good?" That seems to be the question that Woo is dramatizing in many of his films. His movies are populated by men trying to maintain their honor while living in a world of disloyalty, greed, and lust.

Which brings us to Woo's other trademark: his serpentine, super-melodramatic plots. In *A Better Tomorrow 2*, for example, two brothers go undercover to infiltrate a counterfeiting gang. The gang's leader finds out that the younger brother is a policeman. At the same time he is suspicious of the other man (he doesn't know they are related), so he orders the older brother to prove his loyalty by shooting the cop to death in front of the assembled gang. The brother who is to be killed whispers to the other, "Better he trusts one of us." The other brother glances at the gang surrounding them, realizes they can't fight their way out, and shoots his brother.

A man driven by duty finds himself in an untenable position: He can try to save his brother, lose their quarry, and likely fail at the rescue in the process, or he must commit the most anguishing act in order to reach his goal. Woo faces the conflict unflinchingly. An American film maker would have forced a happier resolution on the situation, if he even wrote it at all.

BUT THERE'S MORE TO HONG KONG CINema than gore and violence. There's also sex. In this area, Hong Kong cinema is closer to European standards than to U.S. ones. Hong Kong film makers regularly turn out big-budget showcases of unabashed erotica. Indeed, films such as *Sex and Zen*, the *Erotic Ghost Story* series, and *Escape from the Brothel* can match anything the Europeans make in abundant nudity and sexuality. And they go far beyond even the unrated versions of such U.S. films as *Basic Instinct*.

Many of these films are erotic thrillers whose plots echo similar American films: Someone has sex and must pay. For example, in *Cash on Delivery*, the protagonist has a brief encounter with a sexy young woman who develops a fatal attraction to him. When he tries to break things off, their meeting degenerates into a brawl in which he accidentally kills her husband. It turns out that this is what the young woman was planning from the start, and she accuses him of murder. In true movie fashion, the man's girlfriend is a lawyer, and only she can get him free.

But what is unique to many other erotic films made in Hong Kong is their sense of ribaldry. We really don't have anything like them in America, although some classics of English literature, such as *The Canterbury Tales*, are similar to the spirit of these films. Indeed, many of the best of Hong Kong's erotic films draw upon ribald classics of Chinese literature.

For example, *Sex and Zen* is based upon a Chinese classic. In *Zen*, the leading man, deciding that he is "too small," has a wizard replace his penis with that of a horse. The wizard is one of the clumsiest men around, and before the (bloodless) operation is completed, it degenerates into a sickly hilarious piece of slapstick with people getting knocked unconscious and penises rolling around on the floor.

Hong Kong film makers also draw upon Chinese literature and legends for wild epic fantasies. One of the best of this genre is *The Bride with White Hair*. This film centers on two lovers: a beautiful young woman who is the assassin of an evil cult and a young swordsman who is the champion of those who oppose the cult. Despite its obvious resemblance to *Romeo and Juliet*, this film features many touches that are unique to Hong Kong cinema. The leaders of the cult are brother and sister magicians who cannot satisfy their incestuous lust because they are joined at the spine, Siamese-twin style.

Nowhere is Hong Kong film's disdain for realism more evident than in this movie. The entire film has the look of a dream. The daytime exteriors were shot at night using artificial lights, giving the movie its strange look.

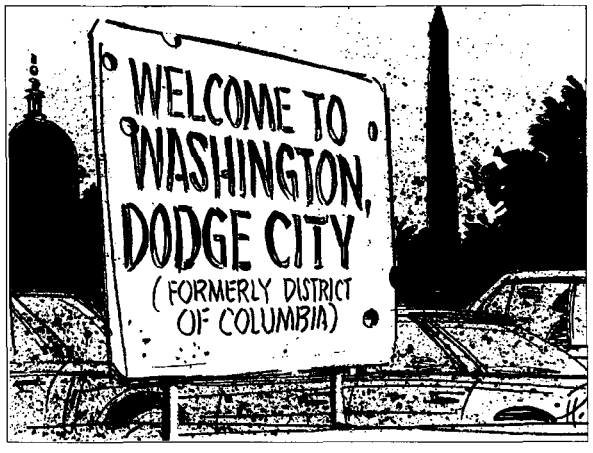
Some have said that because of this rejection of naturalism, Hong Kong films will never be accepted by mainstream American audiences. Perhaps. But these movies are attracting a growing cult audience in North America. And John Woo has already directed one American film, *Hard Target*, and is set to direct another. Maybe given a chance, Americans will show themselves just as appreciative of good spectacle as Asians. ®

Contributing Editor Charles Oliver writes for Investor's Business Daily.

Urban Renewal

By Martin Morse Wooster

Strategies to save our cities



HENRY PAYNE

WE ALL KNOW WHAT CITies used to be for. In our parents' and grandparents' time, they went downtown to shop at a department store, to take in a movie, to visit the latest exhibits at the local museum, to go to a concert, or to go see a game at the stadium. Most people, even when they lived in the suburbs, commuted downtown to work.

Most of those rationales for cities have faded. A rising number of people have their jobs, as well as their homes, in the suburbs. There's no need to go to the picture palace downtown when there's a multiplex at the mall. Though many of the old museums are still downtown—besieged by decay, degradation, and political correctness—they face a rising number of competitors in the suburbs. And a sports complex these days is as likely to be in Auburn Hills or Landover as in Detroit or Washington.

Today, far too many cities—particularly older Northeastern metropolises—are home only to the wealthy few able to afford their rehabilitated townhouses and to the downtrodden poor who can't afford to go anywhere else. A recent article by Robert S. Guskind predicts dire consequences from that trend. In the year 2016, Guskind foresees, America's cities will be divided into a few wealthy enclaves being slowly swamped by the rising underclass.

In the 21st century, Guskind writes, a million soldiers will patrol the ghettoes, and a million urban convicts will rot in a huge prison in the Arizona desert. He envisions a Washington where the wealthy live in terror: K Street lobbyists have to pass through checkpoints and barricades; rich Georgetown residents enter their townhouses through secret tunnels; and *The Washington Post* has fled its urban stronghold for a secure harbor in the suburb of Loudoun County, Virginia.

Guskind's article did not appear in a thunderous organ of the nationalist right, but in the June 18 *National Journal*, the influential Capitol Hill weekly. No doubt his tale gave nightmares to the pinstripers who can afford the *Journal*'s hefty subscription fee.

A more telling (and more plausible) sign of urban decline appeared in the July 23 *Economist*, which reports that Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley has called for banning public telephones in his city, calling them "outdoor offices for drug-dealers and criminals."

SO OUR CITIES ARE LOSING THE OLD-FASHioned luster of the bustling, exhilarating metropolis. They are increasingly bleak places where you can't find nightlife or even a telephone. In a search for solutions to the many fiscal and managerial problems plaguing America's older cities, many mayors are privatizing. Surprising items are for sale: In New York City, Nick Gilbert reports in the June 21 *Financial World*, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani is considering selling two or three of the city's waste treatment plants, which could net New York $800 million. Giuliani also might sell the entire New York City water supply system, which could add $9 billion to city coffers. (Like many cities, New York once had a private water supply; the "Manhattan" part of what is now Chase Manhattan Bank was originally a private water company.)

Most mayors, however, are proposing more timid reforms. The conventional wisdom among mayors these days is "public-private partnerships," in which business and government unite for the common good. "A bipartisan consensus is being built in the heart of America," the July 11 *Business Week* editorialized. "Mayors and governors of both parties are quickly moving toward a centrist economic and political program that calls for entrepreneurial-minded governments to actively help companies grow."

Seasoned magazine readers know that whenever *Business Week* discovers a vital center around which reasonable Republicans and Democrats can coalesce, it's time to grab your wallet and check your change. Instead of reflexively praising public-private partnerships, it's better to ask if such "partnerships" cause the state to grow or shrink.

Many times, of course, such "partnerships" bloat governments. Sports stadiums are a case in point. Liberals in particular should be outraged by new stadium construction. Such facilities take money away from the poor through increased sales taxes or lottery tickets and reward wealthy players, very wealthy skybox patrons, and extremely wealthy team owners. Plus, there's no evidence that stadiums generate new wealth for a city, since most people attending sports events are simply diverting money that they might have spent on other entertainments.

In Cleveland, Rondo Bartomile reports in the June *Progressive*, the city asked voters in 1990 to approve $275 million in

new taxes for the Gateway Center, a complex combining a stadium for baseball's Cleveland Indians and an arena for basketball's Cleveland Cavaliers. Advertisements promised that the new facility would provide 28,000 new jobs, new housing for the homeless, and $15 million for schools in return for government's 50 percent ownership of the project.

It has been four years since the new taxes were approved. None of the money for social programs has appeared, the stadium was $43 million over budget, the arena is currently $49.2 million over budget (and isn't finished), the city has provided an additional $12 million in transportation subsidies, and the state of Ohio has spent $31 million on the Gateway project and loaned the venture an additional $17.4 million. This remarkably poor "investment," Bartomile writes, is evidence that "Jesse James and Al Capone working as partners couldn't do a better job of cleaning out your city treasury than a major-league sports entrepreneur."

ANOTHER DUBIOUS EFFORT AT "PARTNERships" is in telecommunications. In at least 50 cities, Herbert Lindsay reports in the July *American City & County*, municipalities buy telephone lines and then rent them to businesses and homes. Those cities (notably Anchorage and Fairbanks, Alaska) argue that because they own hundreds or thousands of telephone lines, they can get a better deal from telephone companies than individuals can. Thus, they can not only save their residents money, but can earn more revenue.

But cities don't always manage their lines as efficiently as private interests. The telephones in New York City's World Trade Center, Lindsay reports, earn the center's landlord, the Port Authority of New York, $12.4 million each year, while Cheyenne, Wyoming, which has about the same number of telephone lines, earns only $136,000 each year from US West, that city's monopoly telephone company.

Some effective "public-private partnerships," however, do reduce government by privatization and contracting out. Some of the reform-minded mayors who are shrinking the state, such as Milwaukee's John Norquist and Philadelphia's Ed Rendell, are Democrats. But many of these principled politicians are a relatively new phenomenon—Republican mayors, as Rob Gurwitt reports in the February *Governing*. Republicans traditionally controlled such Sunbelt cities as Dallas and San Diego. But crumbling Democratic machines allowed Republicans to extend their control to several big cities for the first time in a generation. Los Angeles was ruled by Democrats for 36 years until Richard Riordan's triumph in 1993; New York City had Democratic mayors for 22 years until Rudolph Giuliani's victory (or even longer if you argue that party-switching John Lindsay wasn't *really* a Republican).

Gurwitt profiles Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith to highlight the changes these mayors are making. Indianapolis has a long tradition of Republican rule, but Goldsmith's immediate predecessors were big-government men. Richard Lugar (now a senator) annexed the surrounding suburbs, and William Hudnut built scores of facilities, most notably the Hoosierdome, the home of the NFL's Indianapolis Colts. (See "Competitive Instinct," August/September 1993.)

Goldsmith, by contrast, appears to be committed to shrinking the state. Sometimes he has privatized, as in selling the city's golf courses. Other times he has contracted out services, such as trash collection and some road maintenance. But most promising is his call for devolving power to neighborhood associations and local community development organizations, a process Goldsmith calls "municipal federalism." He foresees those local associations ultimately being able to control their own parks and repair their own streets.

SUCH DEVOLUTION IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE innovative thinking necessary if our cities are to be saved. The federal government can also encourage this process by deregulation, most notably of "unfunded mandates"—regulations Washington creates and then asks cities and states to pay for. As William Tucker reports in the August 1 *National Review*, the Environmental Protection Agency is the most enthusiastic supporter of those mandates, forcing cities to pay $3.6 billion just to comply with the Clean Water Act. According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors, unfunded mandates will cost cities $54 billion between 1994 and 1998—money that will have to be collected from the taxpayers or diverted from more useful purposes.

The federal government also plays its part in ensuring urban degradation. Ideally, the best way to reduce crime in central cities is to encourage job-creating enterprises, but the failure of Jack Kemp's efforts during the Bush administration shows that Washington isn't any good at pushing people to become enterprising and entrepreneurial. However, the federal government can fight crime in the ghetto by reducing or eliminating barriers to entrepreneurship such as mandatory benefit packages, punitive Social Security taxes, and the Davis-Bacon Act. Repealing mandatory minimum sentencing programs for non-violent offenders and decriminalizing drugs also would free up space in jails for the hardened criminals—violent muggers, armed robbers, murderers, and rapists—who deserve to spend a long time in prison.

Mayors cannot blame all their problems on Washington, however. The failure of the urban renewal programs of the 1960s is a sober reminder that neighborhoods can be destroyed but not created. Pharaonic politicians can spend billions on stadiums, "festival marketplaces," and amusements, but inevitably those ventures will turn into white elephants when sports teams lose or the people's appetite for *tschotskes* is glutted. The quirky, eccentric, and charming aspects of urban life are best preserved by allowing them to grow organically, through lower taxes and less regulation, not by egotistical politicians eager to turn their city into a casino or a mall. ®

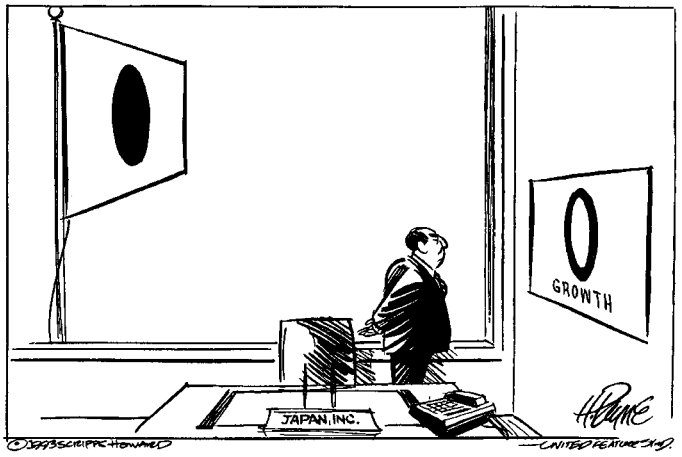
Contributing Editor Martin Morse Wooster is the author of Angry Classrooms, Vacant Minds *(Pacific Research Institute).*

Blinded by the Sun

By Oren Grad

Looking at the Sun: The Rise of the New East Asian Economic and Political System, by James Fallows, New York: Pantheon Books, 517 pages, $25.00

Japanophobia: The Myth of the Invincible Japanese, by Bill Emmott, New York: Times Books, 261 pages, $25.00



HENRY PAYNE

EVER SINCE MATTHEW PERRY'S first contact with Japan almost 150 years ago, the United States has been remarkably ambivalent toward the Land of the Rising Sun. As Japan has adapted and mastered elements of Western civilization ranging from wearing tuxedos to manufacturing high-tech consumer goods, we have been at turns flattered and fearful.

Over the past 25 years or so, as Japan emerged as the most ferocious—and ostensibly unstoppable—Asian economic tiger, Americans have been particularly edgy on commercial grounds, worried that the Japanese shred U.S. businesses like so much raw meat. James Fallows's *Looking at the Sun* and Bill Emmott's *Japanophobia* represent the latest additions to the long-running debate about Japan and American economic policy. Although neither book is exhaustive, each takes a provocative position on the Japanese experience and its relevance for other countries.

Fallows, the Washington editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, is a prominent member of what's known as the "revisionist" school of thought on Japan. Although their views differ in significant ways, all of the revisionists agree on a fundamental premise: Japan is radically *different* from Western nations. Hence, they argue, it is a serious mistake to try to understand Japan in terms of American social, economic, and political history.

In part, the revisionist movement was a legitimate reaction to the naive and condescending postwar American perceptions of the Japanese as simply junior Americans who were gratefully and diligently absorbing the gift of our tutelage in democracy. Revisionist writers have focused on the ways in which the underlying reality of Japanese life differs from both surface appearances and American expectations.

Scholar Chalmers Johnson, for example, in his *MITI and the Japanese Miracle* (1982), traced the continuities between pre- and postwar Japan, not only in specific government policies but in organizational functions and even in the actual individuals who held positions of power. Dutch journalist Karel van Wolferen's *The Enigma of Japanese Power* (1989) explored in detail the web of corruption underlying Japanese party politics; the nearly autonomous, self-perpetuating bureaucracy that lies behind the facade of parliamentary democracy; and the complex of beliefs and attitudes among the Japanese people that makes the whole mess so resistant to reform.

For all of its insights, the revisionist movement would have been of purely academic interest were it not for the coincidence of two developments: the meteoric rise of Japan's economy in the years since the war and the apparent stagnation of the American economy in the post-Vietnam era. Revisionists have responded with both a diagnosis and a prescription for our own economic malaise. Japan, they argue, is guided by a world view that sees economics as merely a tool of national strength, while America clings to a false religion of neoclassical economic theory. Japan's system works stunningly well, while ours falters. Indeed, Japan literally feeds off of our blind adherence to such outdated concepts as "consumer welfare," "free trade," and "global allocative efficiency." If America is to have any hope of thwarting Japan's rise to global politico-economic leadership, proclaim the revisionists, it too must adopt a protectionist trade policy and an interventionist domestic industrial policy.

Looking at the Sun stands on these familiar revisionist foundations but, in its hemispheric reach and conceptual pretensions, is an altogether more ambitious effort than even van Wolferen's quasi-encyclopedic *Enigma*. Fallows argues that East Asia, with Japan at the lead, has evolved a form of political economy that is systematically more effective than a free-market approach at producing sustained economic growth and the geopolitical power that eventually follows.

SEEKING THE SOURCE OF ASIA'S SUCCESS, Fallows locates the roots of the "new Asian system" in old-style mercantilism. He draws on the writings of the early 19th-century German political economist Friedrich List, repeating the familiar litany of what's wrong with free-market, or "Anglo-American," economics. It encourages consumption today at the expense of productive capacity tomorrow and indulges individuals at the expense of the community and the national interest, says Fallows. Above all, it's totally unrealistic as an account of the way the world works. Every nation that has enjoyed a period of global dominance achieved it via inter-

ventionist policies.

Eager to apply the coup de grâce to the free-market position, Fallows adds a new twist to the old arguments. Anglo-American economics is discredited, he asserts, because it fails the test of history, the test of theory, and the test of current experience.

The free-market position fails the test of history, says Fallows, because it does not explain how England and then America rose to power (both Britain and America, after all, violated free-market precepts routinely). It also fails the test of theory because it "do[es] not explain how one country can take a lead over others in technology or productivity" (the mathematical models of modern economics tell us only about the efficient use of resources at hand, not how new ones are created). And it fails the test of current experience because it cannot explain why Asian economies have grown faster than any others in the last generation (something the Asians themselves proclaim, now that they've emerged from America's shadow and have developed the self-confidence to speak for themselves).

ALL THREE OF THESE "FAILURES" AMOUNT to the same argument, which has two parts. The first is indeed a historical point. No nation that has risen to economic and political leadership followed a pure laissez-faire policy. Unfortunately for Fallows's argument, neither has any other nation. If "Anglo-American economics" explains too little, Listian mercantilism explains too much. Why did England and America rise to power, how do some countries take a lead over others in technology, and why have Asian economies grown faster than any others if governments of other countries intervened as much or more? To claim that the winners simply did it better is to beg the question of why—and of whether apparent successes can be reproduced elsewhere.

Fallows himself characterizes France, for example, as operating "a Japanese-style *dirigiste* system without the social control." Yet not only is America *not* swimming in French cars and VCRs, but the French government is hobbled by the financial wreckage of its subsidized "national champions." Perhaps then it's really the social control that accounts for East Asia's success? "The most successful Asian societies are, in different ways, fundamentally more repressive than America and most of Europe are," writes Fallows, "and their repression has so far been a key to their economic success."

Yet Fallows cannot bring himself to carry his own logic to its natural conclusion. His liberal sensibilities take over, and he beats a hasty retreat: "The Asian model is not 'superior' in any sweeping sense. After all, it is more confining for individuals. It has so far proven inferior in generating new scientific knowledge and fostering lone creative talents and it is hard on the weak, minorities, and outsiders. *It could not be applied in most Western countries, especially the United States.*" (Emphasis added.)

No nation that has risen to economic and political leadership followed a pure laissez-faire policy. Unfortunately for Fallows's argument, neither has any other nation.

Despite that telling admission, Fallows remains committed to the notion that we have something fundamental to learn from the Asian model. So what lesson does he draw? That America needs more *dirigisme*. Have faith, and all will be well.

The second part of the "failures" argument has to do with economics and its role in explaining the world. Astonishingly, Fallows betrays not the faintest awareness of recent work on the economics of growth and neoclassical updates of comparative advantage models, some of which he might have used to bolster his case. So while it's certainly true that the explanatory power of economists' models is rather less than they fancy, Fallows, because he seems so ignorant of contemporary research, is hardly in a position to make the charge stick.

But let us grant Fallows his point, while recognizing that he has set fire to a straw man. Neoclassical economics cannot explain every aspect of economic growth, but we shouldn't expect it to. Free markets are not the same thing as neoclassical economics at all, nor are they logically reducible to it. A predilection for free markets is not in any way incompatible with a recognition that exogenous factors of culture, individual idiosyncrasy, and historical accident can have a major impact on development.

Indeed, the staying power of free-market ideals in America has less to do with an irrational attachment to abstract economic principles than with a rough-and-ready, pragmatic judgment of what seems to work. That judgment itself is informed by a more fundamental, exogenous moral/ethical belief that, to the extent possible, people ought to be free to live their lives as they see fit. Fallows is not entirely off base when he charges that for Americans political economics is "an essentially religious question," though he seems to have forgotten the proverbial advice to people who live in glass houses.

The urgency of Fallows's efforts to buy respectability for interventionist policy by placing it on a philosophical foundation—indeed, the entire appeal of the revisionist approach to anyone beyond the community of Japan scholars—rests on a vague but profound fear that America has lost the secret of perpetual economic growth, and Japan has found it. Yet the fantasy of a Japanese philosopher's stone vanishes upon a closer look.

FALLOWS, FOR INSTANCE, OFFERS A CAPsule history of the rise of the Japanese semiconductor industry. He portrays it as the crowning glory of a coordinated strategy of massive capital investment that with military precision captured the business of memory-chip production, dominated collateral industries, and trapped the United States in a position of dependence

for both commercial products and military components.

In choosing the semiconductor industry as his example, Fallows plays to the current fashion of seeing chips as the source of economic salvation. Yet the commodity-chip markets dominated by Japan make for a profitless business and the market share Japan purchased by brute force can be—and is being—bought in turn by South Korea and Taiwan. The United States itself could always buy it back if there were a compelling need. But there isn't one now.

Despite the industrial-policy gurus' neat theories of planned technological development, "success" in memory chips has failed to bring with it the expected collateral impacts. Japanese companies haven't made much of a dent overseas in the microprocessor, computer, or software markets despite massive investment and government R&D subsidies. Within the past two years, an invasion by American producers has thrown even Japan's domestic PC market into turmoil, wrecking a cozy oligopoly in which Japanese vendors used fat profits from overpriced PCs based on backward, proprietary technology to subsidize other domestic and overseas operations.

THERE'S A MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM WITH Fallows's selective vision, as well. He sees the semiconductor industry as a model for the general success of a Japanese mercantilist development strategy which aims at domination. But the international record of Japanese industry more broadly—even in areas considered "high technology"—is extremely uneven. In fields such as chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and biotechnology, Japanese industry has remained weak despite years of protected markets, R&D effort, and procurement subsidy.

If we throw in the domestic sector and examine the trend in Japan's GDP over the past 30 years, the claim that Japan has found some sort of economic magic wand becomes still less plausible. Viewed as a five-year moving average, which smooths out year-to-year variations and brings out longer-term trends more clearly, Japan's annual GDP growth fluctuated around the 10 percent level through the 1960s, dropped to a 4 percent trend line around the time of the first oil shock in 1973, and remained there through the end of the 1980s. With the collapse of the late '80s "bubble economy" and the onset of the current recession, GDP growth has crashed to near zero. While it is anybody's guess when and how strongly Japanese growth will rebound, the trend of the past 30 years begs explanation. Whether because he mistrusts neoclassical theory or because he feels he is on to something bigger, however, Fallows pays hardly any attention to economic statistics.

The same cannot be said of Bill Emmott. As Japan bureau chief, business-affairs editor, and now editor-in-chief of

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Gillian Tett, *Financial Times*, May 1994

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The Economist, he has been arguing for years that however "different" the Japanese may appear or believe themselves to be, in the end they are subject to the same market forces as anyone else. In his 1989 book *The Sun Also Sets*, Emmott analyzed the Japanese economy, concluding that Japan's trade surpluses, capital exports, and savings rate are destined to subside as demographic, cultural, and economic forces follow their natural course. *Japanophobia* briefly updates that argument in light of the past four years, while focusing more narrowly on a particular phenomenon: the global expansion of Japanese multinational companies.

JAPANOPHOBIA SKETCHES OUT SIX REASONS why Japanese firms have rushed to invest overseas: perceived opportunities to arbitrage superior management against lower wage rates; the need to evade trade barriers; the cheapness of foreign assets paid for in inflated yen borrowed at low interest rates; the need to be represented locally to be successful in certain highly competitive markets; the opportunity to take advantage of local technology; and the pursuit of Japanese customers overseas.

Emmott reviews the experience of Japanese multinationals overseas in four industries—cars, entertainment, tires, and finance—and makes a plausible case that their successes and failures can be accounted for in decidedly mundane terms. And failures there have been indeed. The takeover of Firestone by the Japanese firm Bridgestone has been as pathetic a comedy of errors as any all-American corporate foul-up. The major Japanese securities firms and banks prospered only so long as their Japanese customers overseas had pots of money, while their efforts to build genuinely domestic businesses were non-starters. Sony and Matsushita paid grossly inflated prices for Hollywood studios in a quest for a supposed synergy between entertainment software and hardware. The investments are now finally showing some signs of life, but the long-term success of those ventures is still an open question.

By contrast, the Japanese automakers have, on the whole, been much more successful, and Emmott describes some of the ways in which skilled management has overcome the problems of overseas investment. He dissects the fuss over "local content," and argues that the logic of "lean production" dictates that manufacturers locate more and more aspects of the business near their target markets if "transplant factories" are to be successful over the long haul.

Emmott's case studies are useful in puncturing the illusion of Japanese invincibility. His broader macroeconomic arguments, which are presented in greater detail in *The Sun Also Sets* and which I have not laid out here, are clear and convincing as far as they go. His skepticism toward revisionist industrial-policy nostrums is on the mark. But in the end he really doesn't meet the challenge raised by *Looking at the Sun*, however flawed its conclusions may be.

That's because Emmott makes no attempt to justify grand ideas. He simply assumes that neoclassical economic theory holds within a certain domain of validity. His books relentlessly pile up concrete details to build his case that the phenomena he describes are indeed understandable on his terms. But recall Fallows's gripe that neoclassical economics fails to explain differential growth adequately. By confining himself to a neoclassical framework, Emmott fails to address satisfyingly the underlying fears which give the revisionist approach its appeal.

These fears are perhaps more about ourselves than about Japan. Suppose, for example, that in all of the dimensions that matter, Japan is indeed converging on the West and is destined to settle into a respectably sluggish economic middle age typical of other G7 countries. Even if Japan were to negotiate the transition to slower growth without serious social mishap, we would still face a far greater challenge to our thinking about economy and society than any posed by Japan in miracle-growth mode. On present trends, we would be left with a situation in which developed nations settle into an indefinite period of slow growth, while rapid development is limited to nations playing catch-up.

Libertarian ideals are closely linked in the American psyche with ideas of steady progress and unlimited frontiers. Their survival depends on the identification and wide cultivation of those extra-economic virtues and habits which make continued growth possible. In that sense, at least, Fallows's alarm is a timely one. We still have our work cut out for us. ®

Oren Grad is a consultant in international health and economic development at Abt Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He recently spent nine months as a visiting scientist at Tokyo University.

A Call to Consciousness

By James Sniechowski

The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem, by Nathaniel Branden, New York: Bantam Books, 346 pages, $22.95

"OF ALL THE JUDGEMENTS WE pass in life, none is as important as the one we pass on ourselves." With that introductory declaration, Nathaniel Branden sets the direction for the book in which he crystallizes his life's mission—the exploration and articulation of the deep structure and value of self-esteem. It is an important mission for our time.

The notion of self-esteem has been deservedly ridiculed for being soft-headed,

delusional, and destructive. Consider, for example, a *Time* magazine report on standardized math tests given to 13-year-olds in six countries. The Koreans scored highest and the American scores were the worst. Nevertheless, when asked if they *felt* they were good at math, the Americans were number one.

Similarly, most new-age gurus advocate strategies of "affirmation" to teach their followers how to manifest success, abundance, and self-esteem. All one need do, say the gurus, is systematically repeat such statements as "I am valuable just as I am" or "I love myself" or "I deserve all that I want." These teachers assure their disciples that, with practice, reality will align itself with the devotee's desire and a powerful, effective self will appear.

Such views are the product of what Branden calls "feel good" self-esteem. They are based in a sense of entitlement and a belief in effortless gratification. "A disservice is done to people," he contends, "if they are offered 'feel good' notions of self-esteem that [are] divorced from questions of consciousness, responsibility, and moral choice." Those who embrace such notions deny the very real demands and exigencies of life. They abdicate decision and recoil at the appearance of challenge. Ultimately, they are in danger of becoming infantilized, naive, and incapable of self-motivation and achievement.

Standing against such notions, Branden offers a reality-oriented approach to self-esteem. He advocates conscious living in which one "generates principles *from* concrete facts and applies principles *to* concrete facts...in the pursuit of meaning and understanding." Self-esteem, in this context, is not an exercise in solipsism, or in its less virulent relative, narcissism. Rather, it is grounded in the relation one has to one's self as that self stands in relation to the world. The dynamic is necessarily reciprocal and interdependent. Only in that way can there be meaning in the terms *objective* and *subjective*.

CHIP BOK

FOR BRANDEN, SELF-ESTEEM IS COMPOSED of two parallel elements, one objective and one subjective. The first is *self-efficacy*—"confidence in the functioning of my mind, in my ability to think, understand, learn, choose, and make decisions ...my ability to understand the facts of reality that fall within my own sphere of interest and needs." Facts provide a perspective from which we strive to determine accuracy from error, truth from falsehood, reality from delusion. "No one can feel competent to cope with the challenges of life who does not treat seriously the distinction between the real and the unreal." Without an objective relation to facts, self-esteem is impossible.

Spousal domestic violence, for example, can be understood as a painful manifestation of the absence of self-efficacy. We ask why the suffering party doesn't leave the relationship. Violence is, after all, very often present during courtship, before marriage and children add further pressures to the relationship. Despite the danger signs, however, many men and women remain involved in humiliating and degrading circumstances—in large measure because they do not face the facts of their relationship. Self-efficacy would demand a clear assessment of the objective reality and a determination to behave in one's own best interest.

The notion of "one's own best interest" leads to the second element, *self-respect*—the certainty one feels and knows of his or her own value. Self-respect implies "an affirmative attitude toward my right to live and be happy, [my] comfort in appropriately asserting my thoughts, wants, and needs." Self-respect is the subjective pole. It too requires rigorous assessment, but of one's own psychic landscape. Internal events, such as assumptions, beliefs, and expectations, must be continually evaluated to determine their appropriateness to one's current life circumstances.

In the example of spousal violence, self-respect would ask: How do I value myself? What beliefs do I hold about myself that attract and allow for such belittling treatment? What must I do to transform my own self-deprecating and destructive impulses? Self-respect would act as a spur for change.

UNDERSTOOD THIS WAY, SELF-ESTEEM IS neither automatic, an expected birthright, nor mystical, available only through grace and divine intervention. It is the result of conscious effort and determination. One can build one's self-esteem through commitment and practice. And Branden is not merely a theorist: His book includes an elegant and practical 31-week program for building self-esteem. He warns, however, that effort itself, no matter how concerted, can be misguided.

Take, for example, "the highly productive workaholic who is driven to prove his worth to, say, a father who predicted he would always be a loser." The son may be a worldly success, but it is almost axiomatic that he will be "crippled in his ability to find joy in his achievements," because he defines and experiences himself as deficient and defective. He can never be enough. As long as he assents to such belief, his striving is ultimately impotent, because he can never undo the Gordian Knot tied by his father.

On this point Branden makes one of his most incisive and caring statements: "If my aim is to prove I am 'enough,' the project goes on to infinity—because the battle was already lost on the day I conceded the issue was debatable." Such an endeavor can only be other-defined and

other-directed, because it is concerned with proving one's worth to others. It is destined for failure, because the person attempting the proof is sabotaged by a sense that renders proof impossible.

In the second half of the book, Branden extends his principles beyond individuals into the arenas of child rearing, education, work, psychotherapy, and the culture at large. We must understand, he argues, that the idea of *self* is a relatively recent psychological phenomenon, particularly as experienced by the mass of humanity. Historically, most people lived their entire lives in small groups. Often, the tribe was the largest entity with which they had contact. The group was the locus of identity, and its members understood themselves within that framework. The group determined character, assigned roles, prearranged relationships. The world was small and set. Everyone knew their place.

"The essence of the tribal mentality is that it makes the tribe as such the supreme good and denigrates the importance of the individual," Branden writes. What a man or woman thought, felt, desired, imagined was synonymous with what tribal authority taught to be acceptable. Furthermore, authority, for the most part, did not reside in this or that individual but was a function of a group process in which everyone was subsumed. Ritual and dogma set the parameters. Punishment and the fear of the gods kept everyone in line. One's identity and security was not a matter of personal vision but derived from being an integral member of the group.

Self, as we understand it today, was practically nonexistent. There was little or no need for interpersonal skills, because there was little meaningful difference between one person and another. Self, let alone self-esteem, was a foreign and possibly fatal concept.

Today, however, most of us come into constant and sometimes significant contact with mere acquaintances and complete strangers. Unlike the tribal mentality that minimized differences, our daily lives bring us into situations in which inevitable and often radical differences prevail. This profusion of differences forces the self to stand out in relief. Consequently, the idea and experience of being not like others is an unavoidable actuality.

This doesn't mean that most people possess a conscious regard for their own particularity. Quite the contrary. Such appreciation requires effort and awareness. Most people pass their lives in a state of unconscious habituation to the ideas and expectations they formed, for the most part, in their childhood. That echoes the tribal mentality. But, even so, they cannot avoid the plurality of beliefs, tastes, customs, and world views of modern daily life. So a sense of self occurs if only by default, if only in the irritation of being exposed to differences.

"A disservice is done to people," Branden contends, "if they are offered 'feel good' notions of self-esteem that (are) divorced from questions of consciousness, responsibility, and moral choice."

As a consequence, contemporary well-being depends upon our competence in negotiating person-to-person traffic. To do so we must continually assess ourselves and others, regardless of whether or not we possess the interest, tools, or skills.

THIS ANALYSIS HAS POLITICAL CONSEquences. Beginning with the Renaissance, through the Reformation and Enlightenment, a clearer psychological sense of self emerged, and self-ownership became a reality. The self could act upon and become the result of its own private choices. The world witnessed a new form of government and politics based on that emergent sense.

The paradigmatic leap undergirding the founding of the United States was the recognition of the fundamental existence, rights, and sovereignty of the individual as distinct from the dictates of the group. That revolution demanded that the purpose of government was to serve the individual and not the other way around. Reciprocally, the individual had to assume the task of self-governance. But we may ask to what degree most people, then or since, have understood, appreciated, and lived the fact and implications of the psycho-political self.

For many people today, psycho-political life is little different from that of the Middle Ages, when society at large, in Branden's words, "did not value self-assertion; did not understand individuality; could not conceive of self-responsibility; could not imagine innovativeness as a way of life;...did not grasp the relation of mind, intelligence, and creativity to survival."

The current rise of the victimarchy is a vestige of medieval psychology. Despite our avowal of the value and sovereignty of the autonomous individual, for victim groups the self is of little value except as the object of oppression by others. We are besieged by one disadvantaged group after another claiming impotence and innocence and demanding compensation for their purported handicaps and injuries. Individual responsibility becomes an impediment to achieving redress. Self-empowerment and self-directedness fall away, replaced by the demand that others be responsible.

And in these days of rising fundamentalism, there is a growing pressure to comply with group mentality, to surrender the self to dogma. With that, liberty and freedom are in grave danger. But healthy self-esteem can be a powerful and compelling antidote to this inclination toward herd-think.

In this environment, it is particularly important to understand that self-governance is more than a political slogan. It is a way of life. Those who take seriously the implications of self-governance must be responsible for ourselves and to others, learning to create and support our own ex-

istence as a natural course of events. We must choose to face the conditions we create and discover, striving to master ourselves rather than be mastered.

Self-esteem is not a feel-good trend. It is critical to the survival of the way we live. It requires "greater self-responsibility and integrity...the willingness to move through fear to confront conflicts and discomforting realities." A healthy self-esteem is the *sine qua non* of a robust and free life.

As Branden observes, "The American culture is a battleground between the values of self-responsibility and the values of entitlement." The former entails freedom, and freedom has never been free. It obliges effort and vigilance. It stands on conscience and active involvement. If men and women abandon self-responsibility, they become mere spectators in their lives. They resign personal authority and are then compelled to follow.

The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem, then, is a call to consciousness and participation. Its core idea is: "Your life is important. Honor it. Fight for your highest possibilities." This is a book that should not just be read. It should be chewed on, digested, and absorbed into one's identity. It is a guidebook for a well-nourished and powerful life. ℞

James Sniechowski is the founder and director of the Menswork Center in Los Angeles.

Lying for a Living

By Jacob Sullum

Thank You for Smoking, by Christopher Buckley, New York: Random House, 272 pages, $22.00

ON THE FIRST PAGE OF *THANK YOU for Smoking*, we get a description of the evil committed by tobacco companies. A speaker at the Clean Lungs 2000 conference is in the middle of introducing Nick Naylor, chief spokesman for the Academy of Tobacco Studies. " 'I'm certain that our next...panelist,' the speaker hesitated, the word just too neutral to describe a man who earned his living by killing 1,200 human beings a day. Twelve hundred people—two jumbo jet planeloads a day of men, women, and children. Yes, innocent children, denied their bright futures....Lambs, slaughtered by Nicholas Naylor and the tobacco industry fiends he so slickly represented. More than 400,000 a year! And approaching the half-million mark. Genocide, that's what it was..."

Christopher Buckley: The tobacco industry's main sin is mendacity, not murder.

A bit exaggerated, to be sure, but not much different from the rhetoric of anti-smoking activists (or "gaspers," as Nick calls them). Christopher Buckley, a Washington journalist and ex-smoker, appreciates the absurdity of such fulminations, and much of this satiric novel (his fourth) pokes fun at the sanctimony of the anti-smoking movement. The tobacco industry is so besieged by self-righteous paternalists lately that even readers who are inclined to sympathize with the gaspers

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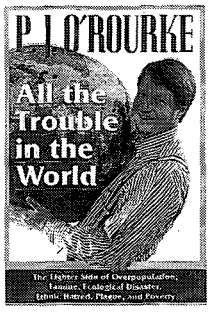

O'Rourke gives his hilarious take on the problems of the world, attacking fashionable worries—famine, plague, racial hatred, poverty and overpopulation—that drive so many of our fellow citizens to distraction, or to political lunacy. Political correctness will never be the same.

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will find themselves rooting for Nick, weasel though he is.

For Buckley (and, ultimately, Nick), the main sin of the tobacco industry seems to be mendacity, not murder. He has a good time lampooning the sort of evasion and misdirection we have come to expect from representatives of the tobacco industry as they attempt to brush off the suggestion that smoking causes lung cancer or that cigarettes are addictive. Nick, a "puffer" himself, is quick to observe that it's impossible to prove in any given case that smoking caused someone's illness, and he is not above inventing claims out of whole cloth (such as "the report that just came out showing that tobacco smoke is replacing the ozone that has been lost due to chlorofluorocarbons").

Research Facility
As if giving us cancer from cigarettes weren't enough, they make us leave the building to smoke...
MIKE LUCKOVICH

In general, the tobacco industry deserves the treatment it gets in *Thank You for Smoking*. Whether or not they go as far as Nick Naylor, cigarette makers are certainly less than candid about the nature of their product and the risks of using it. But their lies are ridiculous precisely because no one believes them. Indeed, no one is expected to. The tobacco companies refuse to acknowledge the unpleasant facts about cigarettes not because they hope to fool consumers but because they are afraid that admitting the hazards of smoking would make them more vulnerable to product-liability suits. Yet whatever legal advantage the industry has gained by continuing to deny the obvious is more than outweighed by its complete loss of credibility in the public debate over smoking.

Nick recognizes this fact, and he wishes the Academy could be straightforward about health risks. When a powerful senator proposes a law that would require a large skull and cross bones on every package of cigarettes (ostensibly to reach illiterates and immigrants who haven't learned English yet), Nick imagines that the industry might take the opportunity to come clean. His inspiration is Death cigarettes. "Nick knew all about Death cigarettes," Buckley writes. "Everyone at the Academy kept a pack, with its distinctive skull and bones logo, despite the fact that the industry's official attitude toward Deaths was not exactly collegial. It was the perfect cigarette for the cynical age. It said—shouted—our product will kill you! What product advertised itself more honestly than that?"

THE INTERESTING THING ABOUT DEATH cigarettes is that they really exist, and the gaspers hate them. Rather than applaud the merchants of Death for their honesty, anti-smoking activists and public-health officials are appalled by what they see as an attempt to capitalize on macho attitudes. They don't want truth in advertising. They want to get rid of cigarettes, period.

But most Americans would probably look upon the tobacco industry more favorably if cigarette companies simply said, "Look, smoking is risky. So are a lot of things that give people pleasure. Smoking may take a few years off your life. But that's a price many people are willing to pay." Then tobacco companies would be in the same position as manufacturers of motorcycles, swimming pools, scuba equipment, skis, hang gliders, roller skates, and fatty foods. You don't hear ski makers say, "We recognize that the use of our product is statistically associated with fractures, and we are prepared to call skiing a risk factor. But we just don't think the causal link has been proven with certainty."

On the other hand, as Buckley makes clear, truth is not an adequate defense against paternalists. Even businesses that are honest about the risks associated with their products have to worry about legislative assaults. Nick seeks comfort in weekly lunches at a Washington restaurant with two friends who work for the alcohol and firearms industries. Since they are known as Merchants of Death, they call themselves the MOD Squad. Their meetings illustrate the frustration of constantly being on the defensive, of always having to justify how you make your living. Whenever a drunk plows into a little old lady, the alcohol spokeswoman is expected to respond. Whenever a nut goes on a rampage with a gun, the firearms spokesman has to issue a press release. And this is really the way Washington works, with unfortunate incidents and gory stories taking the place of arguments and evidence.

Buckley is also right on target in his depiction of the news media, from the vacuity of supposedly serious talk shows to the routine deception and betrayal practiced by successful newspaper reporters. At one point Nick calls a newspaper to complain about the headline over a story about a death threat he received while appearing on *Larry King Live* ("CALLER TO KING SHOW THREATENS TO STUB OUT TOBACCO SPOKESMAN"). He is greeted by a voice-mail message: "You have reached the *Washington Sun*'s ombudsman desk. If you feel you have been inaccurately quoted, press one. If you spoke to a reporter off the record but were identified in the article, press two. If you spoke on deep background but were identified, press three. If you were quoted accurately but feel that the reporter missed the larger point, press four. If you are a confidential White House source and are calling to alert your reporter that the President is furious over leaks and has ordered a review of all outgoing calls in

MIKE LUCKOVICH

White House phone logs, press five."

As that bit suggests, Buckley cannot resist going over the top for a laugh. But despite a cloak-and-dagger plot that involves kidnapping and attempted murder, most of the book rings true: the anti-smoking rhetoric, the tobacco industry's tactics, the maneuvering that always avoids the central issue. Buckley seems ambivalent about the whole mess, one reason that people on both sides of the debate about smoking will enjoy reading this book. The other reason, of course, is that Buckley is funny, and a sense of humor (and perspective) is sorely needed as we head toward the final showdown between the gaspers and the puffers. ®

Contributing Editor Jacob Sullum is articles editor at National Review.

Dead Letters

By Nick Gillespie

Recovering American Literature, by Peter Shaw, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Publisher, 203 pages, $22.00

DURING MY WIFE'S UNDERGRADUATE years in the mid '80s, she took a class in modern poetry taught by a very famous Irish poet and critic (no names, please). He was a curmudgeonly, pedantic old fellow whose considerable literary reputation was outdone only by his even more considerable intellectual biliousness. He was also a hard-line "New Critic," which meant he stressed *explication de texte* and eschewed any recourse to an author's life or times. For New Critics (their brand of criticism was "new" in the 1940s), great literature—at least to the degree that it is "great"—manifests tension, irony, paradox, and several types of ambiguity. The New Criticism, in various forms, dominated academic literary studies through the 1960s and, although no longer cutting-edge, it still exerts considerable influence over the field.

In her term paper for the class, my wife analyzed "The Yachts," a poem by William Carlos Williams, and made the mistake of providing a historical context for her interpretation. She also moved beyond ambiguity to suggest that the poem actually conveyed something like a specific meaning. Her professor was exasperated and informed her that she would have to rewrite the paper. "This historical information is completely extraneous," he told her. "You can't use it to read literature.

Peter Shaw: "The free discussion of American literature is being stifled by a new, radical orthodoxy."

You have to look only at the words on the page." When she tried to discuss the matter with him, he held up his hand: "We can go round and round the mulberry bush, round and round, but you've got to redo the paper." And redo it she did, after being threatened with a failing grade.

I thought about this anecdote after reading the first few pages of Peter Shaw's *Recovering American Literature*, a spirited effort to save our written masterpieces from the clutches (and clichés) of political correctness. When Shaw writes, "The free discussion of American literature is being stifled by a new, radical

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orthodoxy," he has only gotten it part right. "Free discussion" is *always* stifled by orthodoxy, whether new, radical, or otherwise. New orthodoxies come about every so often as revolutionaries—sometimes liberal, sometimes conservative, sometimes neither—depose the *ancien régime*. (As a professor friend of mine once noted, the academy is neither as P.C. as conservatives fear nor as liberals wish.) While Shaw, the current chairman of the National Association of Scholars, rightly derides contemporary critics who reduce complex literary works to unnuanced political tracts, *Recovering American Literature* is ultimately disappointing, largely because its author turns a blind eye to earlier orthodoxies and is unwilling to engage the way in which the marketplace of ideas operates in literary studies.

Lit-crit discourse revolves around a crow/anti-crow rhetorical structure in which a certain way of seeing things gains prominence by relentlessly attacking the status quo and then, ironically enough, attempts to protect itself by deflecting all criticism as uninformed, irrelevant, or otherwise lacking in substance. The New Criticism is a case in point. As it rose to institutional dominance, it banished older, traditional forms of criticism such as philology and biographical study to the intellectual hinterlands. Eventually, of course, the New Criticism itself got old and succumbed to attacks by devotees of more innovative and "relevant" (i.e. politically charged) critical techniques. While these transitions are not clean by any means, it is easy to discuss them, as Shaw does implicitly, in generational terms.

"From the 1920s through the 1960s critics emphasized the distinctive qualities of American writing," writes Shaw. "They identified the moralizing bent whereby, in a troubled and troubling way, American authors probed the ultimate meanings of life and society. And they explored the tendency in the same authors toward indirect, symbolic expression of their doubts about the meaning of it all. In contrast, since the 1960s critics have become convinced that not metaphysical doubt but political certainty characterized the same nineteenth-century writers."

In their relentless politicization of literary studies, Shaw argues, this new generation of critics misinterprets American literature in one of two ways. They either confuse their own radical politics with those of the authors they study (e.g. Herman Melville is made out to be an "enthusiast of the French Revolution he loathed"). Or they condemn authors outright for not being P.C. enough (e.g. *The Scarlet Letter* is the work of a male chauvinist—and capitalist—pig). Although the two strategies are quite different, they produce the same result. "One way or another the American classics are made to serve political ends," writes Shaw.

Unlike his intellectual forebears, Shaw is willing to factor in historical and biographical details and to consider other "extraneous" information. But he is no less dedicated to tension and paradox, criteria which are as reductive as any politically tinted litmus test.

HAVING RECENTLY SAT THROUGH FIVE years of graduate classes at three different universities and having read countless pieces of criticism, I can testify that Shaw has pretty accurately mapped the political contours of the lit-crit landscape. When Shaw quotes a critic convinced by *Moby-Dick* "to work to prevent ecological, economic, or political catastrophe," it's all too familiar. English department faculties, graduate seminars, and academic journals are indeed filled with people who feel a need either to bully a text into interpretive submission or to strong arm it into agreement with a hip political agenda.

What's less clear is whether the manhandling of texts is new and whether the practice is limited to politically motivated readers—critics, for instance, have long been making psychological interpretations that derive more from their own obsessions than from an author's words on a page. As Shaw himself notes, "the skewed [i.e., politicized] interpretations now in favor...go back to the 1950s, when they were given a hearing but judged to be minor contributions." (That such readings were once considered irrelevant and are now so central to the field testifies to the dizzying speed with which academic orthodoxies rise and fall.)

In place of the current emphasis on the "search for subversion," Shaw wants "to resume the discussion of American books that has been interrupted for nearly twenty-five years." To lay the groundwork for that discussion, Shaw explores the "devolution" in criticism of five acknowledged classics of the 19th century: Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Melville's *Moby-Dick* and *Billy Budd*, Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and Henry James's *The Bostonians*. (He also reprints an essay from his earlier book, *The War Against the Intellect*, on Melville's *Typee*.) Each of these consecutive chapters contains a wonderfully contentious review of relevant criticism. Whether a reader is well-versed in or new to literary criticism, he will find much of interest in *Recovering American Literature*.

Rather than sketch out specific interpretations, Shaw's stated goal is to "frame the questions that need to be asked of each work." This seems fair enough, but it soon becomes apparent that, in fact, Shaw is only interested in asking one question over and over: How does the work at hand participate in a paradox? Hence, with regard to *The Scarlet Letter*, "the question of which side is right in the struggle between the punitive ideology of the Puritans and Hester [Prynne's] resistance to it is not meant to be adjudicated." The ending of *Moby-Dick* suggests that "democratic/commercial civilization has not resolved the dilemmas of human existence as well as it thinks. Despite this culture's successes, despite its ability to bring light, it remains metaphysically inadequate be-

fore the irreducible savagery of apparently subdued nature." *Huckleberry Finn* similarly concludes in a critical conundrum, in which "freedom, because it is divorced from principle and devoted to the self alone, cannot sustain a commitment." And so on.

We might call this New New Criticism. Unlike his intellectual forebears, of course, Shaw is more than willing to factor in historical and biographical details and to consider other "extraneous" information. But he is no less dedicated to tension and paradox, criteria which are in their own way as reductive as any politically tinted litmus test. If nothing else, they exclude from discussion literature that is explicitly not interested in balancing competing viewpoints or symbolically expressing "doubts about the meaning of it all." Such a method can't, for example, do much to address 19th-century works such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, and Frederick Douglass's autobiographies, the point of which is precisely to persuade readers to a particular side in a particular debate.

Recovering American Literature draws heavily on the work of Lionel Trilling, the great critic who taught at Shaw's alma mater, Columbia University, from the 1930s to the 1970s. While Shaw makes extensive use of Trilling's novel, *The Middle of the Journey*, in his chapter on *Billy Budd* and sprinkles references to him throughout the book, he seems indebted on an even more fundamental level as well. Trilling, in the hugely influential 1940 essay "Reality in America," asserted that culture, rather than some smoothly operating system, "is nothing if not a dialectic" and that great artists are "repositories of the dialectic of their times," balancing "the yes and no of the culture." For Trilling, and apparently for Shaw, too, what makes great artists great is "that they do not submit to serve the ends of any one ideological group or tendency." That is certainly a fascinating proposition, but it is also one fraught with political implications, particularly considering the time in which it was written. (Not surprisingly, its equivocal nature is a reason some contemporary critics see Trilling as worthy of attack.)

Interestingly, "Reality in America" remains one of the great intellectual hatchet jobs of all time, an exemplum of how critics dispatch their predecessors. In it, Trilling sliced and diced Vernon Parrington, whose multi-volume *Main Currents in American Literature* (1927–30) espoused a more politically engaged criticism. Parrington wasn't just "mistaken in aesthetic judgement," argued Trilling. The older critic embodied a "limited and essentially arrogant conception of reality."

For his sake, I wish Shaw could appreciate such rough-and-tumble ironies in the field of literary studies. But he can't and, as a result, he's unable to savor the contradiction inherent in publishing a widely advertised and reviewed book attacking "the new, radical orthodoxy" of "the politicizing critics, who stifle deviationism." Instead of trumpeting the fact that if he can speak freely others can too, he seems preoccupied that his views have failed to carry the day.

"In academic literary disputes there is never an adjudicating body to pronounce on the issues or even to decide what they are," he writes at one point. "Published contentions about literary works can be noticed, ignored, or credited as each professional reader sees fit." Later, he laments, "It is difficult, though, to hold contemporary critics to account for violating the rules of literary discourse, inasmuch as they explicitly repudiate these rules."

In fact, even the most fundamental question of literary discourse—What constitutes an appropriate object of literary study?—is a topic of debate. While the openness of the field should be celebrated because it allows for greater and more varied discussion, it is easy to see why that very fluidity gives an old-line critic the shakes. You are, in effect, free to say anything—whether it's well-informed or misinformed, logical or illogical, on-target or wide of the mark. And the same freedom that allows you to speak grants others the right to ignore you.

That's not to say that anything goes, that there are *no* rules of discourse. It's more appropriate to say there's no single set of rules. While it's true that there is no definitive adjudicating body to settle disputes, there are all sorts of academic communities and sub-communities that weigh in with opinions (the amount of influence and power each wields varying with time and circumstance).

In the face of such intense, cacophonic competition, it is particularly incumbent upon critics to make a convincing case for why their tastes should be preferred. How is their intellectual product essential to its prospective consumer? It seems that Shaw is mistaking his weak position in the current intellectual marketplace for a structural change in the way that market operates.

Ultimately, he is wrong to direct his anger at younger critics who are merely doing what younger critics always do: knocking off graybeards. It isn't enough to rail against their excesses, overwrought as they may be. The real focus should be on those scholars, young and old alike, who share his views but fail to "direct challenges to the reigning orthodoxy." It is up to them, after all, to create an audience, a demand, for their brand of criticism. That process is not an easy or simple one—every new school of commentary, from the New Criticism to deconstructionism, has had to duke it out—but its very difficulty provides the kind of test by which new critical paradigms are developed and strengthened.

To the extent that *Recovering American Literature* helps cultivate a new line of literary criticism (or resuscitates a dying one), it is all to the good. We can never be at a loss for competing ways of reading our national literature. But to the considerable degree that it merely pines for a lost era in which its author felt more comfortable, it adds little to continuing conversations. ®

Assistant Editor Nick Gillespie is working on a Ph.D. dissertation analyzing depictions of national experience in 19th and 20th-century American literature.

Medical Malpractice

By Thomas W. Hazlett

ClintonCare's new approach to doctoring: First, do some harm.

I PROPOSE THE FOLLOWING ANTI-CRIME program for America: federal funds for midnight basketball in Washington, D.C., eligibility limited to the White House gang-bangers who concocted the Clinton Health Care fiasco. Those Generation Xers have all that energy and nothing to do late at night but cook up predatory social welfare schemes. I say: Put 'em on the court and keep 'em off the computer terminals where they will do real harm, tearing up markets and destroying family-doctor relationships decades in the making. And, while you're at it, you might toss in a little supervisorial grant to me, Tom Hazlett. I could referee—it would give me a chance to blow the whistle on those neighborhood toughs.

Many accuse the Clintonites of concocting a hastily contrived, ill-thought-out health-reform plan. The naysayers simply fail to see its intricate logic. For instance, with all the unemployment the Plan would have wrought, queuing up in long lines at the doctor's office wouldn't have imposed much of a social cost. Jobless folks have time to kill. Now *that's* planning ahead.

Hillary's theory is that we are oppressed by drug companies and heartless insurance executives, and that her plan to shove everyone into regulated co-ops will allow us to bargain down the money-changers with tough spending caps.

A second opinion is in order. Mine is this: The top-down approach to health care aims to control costs by reducing quality. The price controls, both implicit and explicit, are a scam.

One doesn't lower "costs" by giving a patient who is screaming for 100 ccs of Demerol two tablets of Tylenol instead. Tell the patient who's about to have a cold, shiny, stainless steel probe shoved up his digestive tract that the more accurate survey device, an MRI machine, is beyond his Alliance's *global budgetary guidelines*. Now, sir, bend over. This may be the one pain our president fails to feel.

I have lived in a Japanese hospital, survived on Japanese hospital food, and sampled their health-care system firsthand. They have their successes—that's why I traveled there—but on average, there is no match: You'd rather get sick in America. And not just because we still speak English.

Having comparison shopped, I can vouch for it: The American system is outstanding. It is too damned expensive, and reforms that promote genuine competition (such as letting midwives deliver babies and nurses give physicals) would be superb. But exploding costs are tied directly to third-party payment systems, particularly the government's. Medicare/Medicaid expenses grow exponentially; the ballooning federal deficit is propelled by them. While private insurers are moving to HMOs and pre-paid plans that attempt to rationalize expenditures, I get just a bit itchy when I am told that the federal government has got a grand plan. Would you hire the architect who built the ramshackle hovel down the road?

AND THE CLINTONITES HAVE ALREADY engineered a health-care slum: the vaunted children's vaccination program. The plan called for the Good People in Washington to rationalize and nationalize the inoculation of America's youth. Isn't it preposterous that we can put a man on the moon but can't get preschoolers their shots? (Never mind that most everyone is already getting them.)

Administration officials vilified the private sector while portraying their own trickle-down approach as enlightened and humane. They touted it as a demonstration of federal sweetness to come. What came instead was reality. After spending $700,000 on a plan to store the bulk of the nation's vaccine supply, they've junked their government-issue refrigerators and the plan is a shambles. The federal scheme may even result in fewer children getting their shots.

Oops. This was supposed to be the easy way to start. Indeed, Friend of Hillary Marian Wright Edelman, chairwoman of the Children's Defense Fund, was a strong proponent of the national vaccine plan. As late as June 1994 she wrote: "The storage and delivery of vaccines is not a difficult task. It is a function the states have performed efficiently for years." By August, the administration had given up on this no-brainer. I can't wait until they get to the hard parts.

Alas, we face an incredibly steep learning curve. *The New York Times* editorial page, staring straight at the vaccine debacle, fears it was a *tactical* error to make the vaccine program an example of what the administration wanted to do to us: "Some officials recklessly advertised the vaccine distribution program as a dress rehearsal for their efforts to restructure the entire health care delivery system," the *Times* opined. "That was unfortunate. The larger goal...should not be made to suffer from one silly but correctable blunder."

If failing to inoculate children is "silly," perhaps messing up our kidney dialysis system would be characterized as "zany." Here we have the smoking gun—and the "wacky" *Times* wants to bar the evidence. Let's hope there's no exclusionary rule in the court of public opinion and that the jury remembers the Clintons' brave testimony when the health-care verdict is at long last handed down. ®

Contributing Editor Thomas W. Hazlett teaches economics and public policy at the University of California, Davis.

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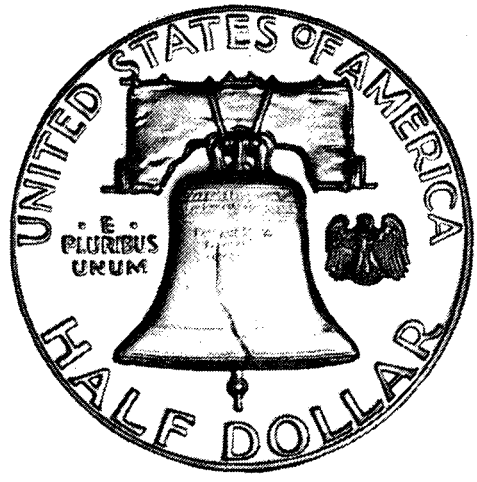

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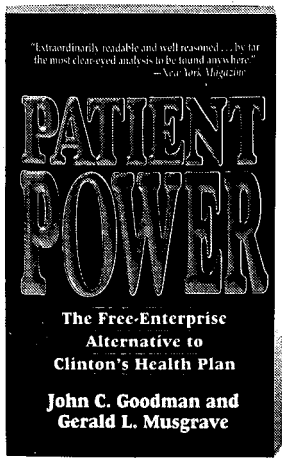
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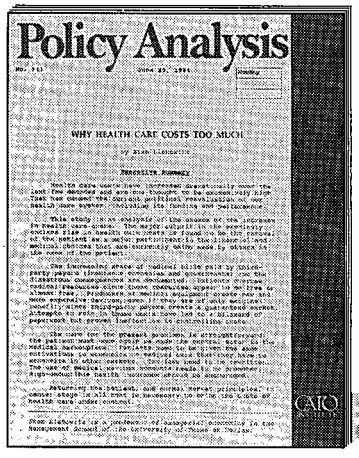

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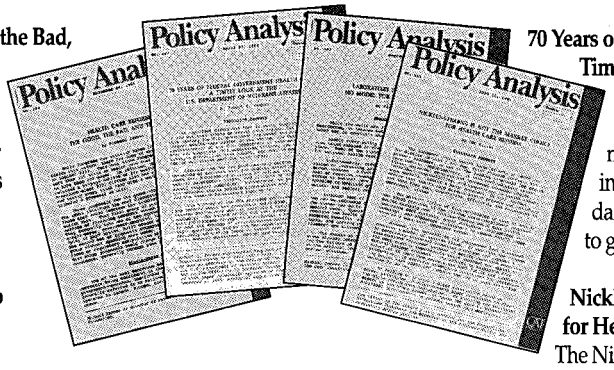

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